

# THE WIRE

adventures in modern music

ISSUE 143 • JANUARY 96 • £2.50 / US\$5.50

1995: the musical year in review  
*charts, quotes, opinions*

Gavin Bryars's  
*jukebox*

Bill Nelson

DJ Hype

Peter Blegvad

## Howie B

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46-46 Poland Street - London W1V 3DF - UK  
Tel: 0171 432 6422 Fax: 0171 262 4767  
e-mail: the\_wire@ukonline.co.uk

Publisher: **Adèle Taron**  
Publisher's Assistant: **Vanessa Smith**  
Advertising Tel: 0171 494 1340

Editor: **Tony Harrington**  
Deputy Editor: **Rob Young**  
Art Editor: **Robin Hawes**

Subscription: **Ben Hesse** Tel: 0171 234 3555

Founder: **Anthony Wood**  
Chairman of the Namara Group: **Naim Attallah**

Contributors: **Sylvester Balazard, John Barnes, Mike Barnes, Dean Becker, Chris Bell, Chris Blackford, Louise Chiswick, Robert Clark, Laura Connolly, Richard Cook, John Corbett, Peter Culshaw, Phil England, Keith Khan, Mark Koplex, Matt Rytche, Louise Gray, Andy Hamilton, Steve Holje, Simon Hopkins, David Iles, Tim Kent, Rahona Khanan, Nick Kimbrey, Bika Kopt, Art Lange, Howard Mandel, K Martin, Peter McIntyre, Andy Medhurst, Will Montgomery, Brian Moten, Ian Penman, Edwin Penzance, Simon Reynolds, Tom Ridge, Jonathan Romney, Paul Schiller, Richard Scott, Peter Shapiro, Chris Sharp, Mark Slater, Paul Strupp, Julie Tarsana, David Toop, John L. Walters, Ben Watson, Barry Withersden, Robert Yates**

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## The February issue of *The Wire*

Yet more ballistic pages of features, interviews, CD reviews, books, multimedia, live events, free offers and more.

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# Letters

## Krautrock revisited 1

I'd like to let you know that Kerry Aberhart's pious letter (The Wire 142) condemning me for comments I made concerning the music of Neu!, Can and Faust in The Wire 140 was based on a complete misinterpretation of what I actually said. At no point did I say that Can sounded dead, dated or irrelevant or that Neu! sounded fossilised. If Kerry wasn't so intent on adopting a piercingly high moral tone to put his point across, he might have deduced that I, in fact, meant something rather different.

It is, of course, obvious that the music of these groups is as empowering and as inherent with future possibilities as any yet created, and it is for these reasons that I would rather not see it become hermetically sealed into the "classic" canon and its essence smothered, while trying to preserve the original groups through the formaldehyde nature of historical perspective.

It is the ideas themselves that must be taken forward into different perspectives, new juxtapositions and contexts (yes! even pop contexts). These are the vital, relevant and living aspects. It still sounds modern because it still resonates unforeseen events and actions today, interpretation is entirely open. Neu!, of course, still sound crisp and locking in the 90s but they recorded in the 70s. Can's Peel Sessions sound anything but dead and irrelevant but it was recorded 23 years ago. "Welcome Back Dams," says Kerry. What is he talking about? That was Dams's voice nearly a quarter of a century ago.

To finish, I'd like to say thanks to Kerry for his comments about the 'groop' — I've heard them all before from inept journalists. Do you really

think we've been doing this music for five years now so at the end of it we can sit back satisfied in our "effervescent smugness", that we're seen as "stylish" and "cool"? I don't give a fuck about these things and I'm far from being satisfied with our music. I'd just rather not pester around like the curator of some old museum, dusting the exhibits down every five years like some people I could mention.

PS *Bowie's Low* is a great LP, you berk.  
**Tim Gane, StereoLab London**

## Krautrock revisited 2

Quite liked Simon Reynolds's article about American post-rock and Rob Young's review of Julian Cope's *Krautrock Sampler* (The Wire 141). Sorry to share my paranoia with you, but these last few weeks I've been going through a bit of a crisis, wondering whether all these early 70s German groups really were quite as brilliant as we all pretend whenever we self-consciously drop their names into casual conversation. It's just that sometimes I lie awake at 3am and think that perhaps Amen Dûl were just a load of hypersensitive hippies who had a penchant for standing too close to their microphones. Amen Dûl I were a bunch of Heavy Metal freaks who didn't quite grasp the joke about Black Sabbath. Can usually sounded as though they'd run out of ideas three minutes into two of their albums (and that includes *Togo/Mogo*). Cusser started off making random electronic banging noises but soon got as bored as the rest of us and so started looping everything and striving for a sort of Germanic testcard music. Faust were to rock music what Tony Hancock was to art in his film *The Rebel*. Neu! were a couple of blokes

**Write to:** *Letters, The Wire*, 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF,

or fax: 0171 287 4767, or e-mail: [the\\_wire@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:the_wire@ukonline.co.uk)

Every letter published wins a FREE CD

only capable of working at three speeds — very fast, very slow and dead halt. Ash Ra Tempel and Popul Vuh were only doing vastly slowed down versions of Ravel's Bolero. Guru Guru were the German equivalent of Sky, and Tangerine Dream — well, they were just Tangerine Dream.

Oh, it'll pass. These are just fleeting thoughts. Most of the time I'm as happy as everyone else to kneel down in reverence before the godlike genius of the aforementioned groups. I was buying and loving this stuff when it first came out — somewhat herdsly I've got the original posters that came with Faust's *So Far* framed and stuck on the walls here at home, and I consider the few dozen original LPs from all these lovely people to be among my most precious possessions. It's just that when I sit here and have wonderful new stuff from the likes of Plastikman, Mouse On Mars, Autchre, Coil, Nurse With Wound, Man or of booming away I wonder why everything always has to be referenced back to Germany, 1972. Or maybe this is just the typical sad whinge of an old fan finding a load of newcomers trampling over once remote and beautiful and secret landscapes.

**Lynne C Doyle** Hampshire

#### Further editions

Re: the relationship between *The Wire* and *The Wire Editions*

*Musc From The Empty Quarter* has been a fully functioning shop/magazine for four years and a bona fide label for 18 months. They have released electronic material from Vanishing Heat, Solar Enemy/Porton Control/Lagowski, as well as an excellent compilation with Lycia, Controlled Bleeding, etc and accompanying book. Recent releases have had free CDs featuring the

Hyponum and Submission labels

Also on a smaller scale is *Impulse* magazine, which runs Jara Discs' 14 issues each with a 40 minute tape of featured artists. Releases have included Musimgauze, Konstruktivists, and they also published the Whitehouse book *Still Gong Strong*.

No, I don't work for either! But I do feel some of your readers may be interested.

**Phil Newall** Wexford

#### Cooling the critics

Some comments on your magazine. It's cool, and I appreciate the interviews with people whom I consider to be important figures in modern music, such as Bruce Gilbert and Brian Eno. The article on Léon Théron and the dawn of electronic music (*The Wire* 139) was excellent. But you need to expand your magazine. There's not enough in it. A lot of what is just second-hand opinion (ie "Is Frank Zappa any good?") and criticism, which in many cases is quite peculiar to the reviewer and of little interest to the rest of us. We need more conversation with the artists involved. And to the extent that your magazine presents opinion and critique, I think that you need to foster dialogue in the pieces rather than just presenting one individual's opinion. Your reviews section seems to be of use primarily to inform readers of what has come out and s/will be available — I can't imagine that anyone takes such over-intellectualised reviews seriously. I believe that, as with the music of Can and Miles Davis, it's groove that counts (not whether a piece's structure fits into some writer's personally cultivated theories). By contrast, Tom Ridge's review of the latest Fall album (*The Wire* 139) was quite good — it presents the

potential listener (at least, the seasoned Fall listener) with some concept of what the album sounds like and what their reaction to it might be.

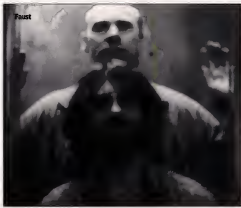
But I enjoy reading your magazine at a news stand (it's too overpriced to buy regularly) and occasionally purchasing it when I see someone important to me interviewed, ie Gilbert or Eno. Your magazine has a nice layout and feel to it — I wish that you would use your position to explore modern music more thoroughly, as opposed to just providing pseudo-intellectuals with a forum in which to pursue their elitist conceptions of music. We need more cataloguing and facilitation of distribution, and less criticism, in my opinion.

**Scott McFarland** MCFARSC@  
[springfield.grummon.com](mailto:springfield.grummon.com)

#### Motet madness

I liked the list of Dodgy Group Names in *The Wire* 141. A lot of ensembles

specialising in medieval, Renaissance and Baroque music are adopting pseudo-group names which are not very interesting, never mind dodgy. Do you think we should offer these people some suggestions for sharpening their image a bit? Like, for instance: Talis Through The Looking Glass, Croftwerk, Byrdshit, Blowjob, Blondef (vocals by King Harry), Minstrel Tension, Viol Bodies, Vaginalstuffs, Rocketbusters, Electric Lute Orchestra, Madrigal Mystery Tour (I suspect this has been done before, but I still like it), Public Ares, Burn Trope, Pavanarama, Everything But The Churl.  
**Roger Stevens** Tunbridge Wells



# sounding off

Live dates, multimedia events, happenings...

Compiled by **Rob Young**

News items should reach us by  
Friday 12 January for inclusion in the February issue

**Frank Black**



**Frank Black** A full-scale national jaunt for the ex-Pee and group whose *Cut Of Ray* is released this month on Epic. Full dates are: Dublin SPX (27 January), Glasgow Garage (29), Newcastle Riverside (30), Manchester University (31), Leeds Metropolitan University (1 February), Sheffield Leadmill (3), Cambridge Junction (4), Wolverhampton Wulfran Hall (5), Bristol University (7), Portsmouth Pyramics Centre (8), London Astoria (9). A Website has just been set up: go to <http://www.sonymusic.de/Music/Progressive/FrankBlack/>. [FrankBlack.html](http://FrankBlack.html)

**Bang On A Can** The downtown New York contemporary music troupe (now moving uptown, see Bites page 14) take to the road this month under the banner 'Six Nights Of Industrial Revolution'. The nine piece ensemble, which includes BOAC founders Michael Gordon, David Lang and Juke Wolfe, will be drilling through a repertoire that comprises Louis Andriessen's *Hout*, a new piece by Hermio Pascoal, Arques, and Steve Martland's *Horses Of Instruction*, as well as music by individual members of the group. Tour dates as follows: Brighton Gardiner Centre (22 January), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (23), Leicester Phoenix (25), Bath University Hall (26), Birmingham Adnan Bout Hall (27), Cambridge Corn Exchange (28). The new *Bang On A Can* CD, *Industry*, is released this month on Sony Classical.

**Electronic Lounge** Robin Rimbaud's regular shindig gets back on the rails for 1996, this month with music from the 'Invisible DJ'. London ICA, 2 January, 9pm-1am, £2.50/£2, info on 0171 496 3032

**The Sprawl** Opening night of a new monthly London club aiming to stimulate both mental and physical parts with a mix of live music, innovative D.J.s, talks, debates and public interviews, multimedia, internet tours and more. The first night features live music from Sons Of Silence (the new incarnation of O Yoko Carigata) and an immersive mixing set from The Wire Sound System. Cafe Internet (22-24 Buckingham Palace Road, Victoria, London SW1), 25 January, 7-11pm, £3/£2.50 plus 50p membership (includes half-hour internet access). Info on 0181 883 0972

**PLG Young Artists Series** 40th five day event sponsored by the Park Lane Group, a showcase of classical instrumentalists in their twenties playing entirely 20th century music on London's South Bank. The Nossack String Quartet play Anthony Gilbert, Paul Newlan and Piers Hellawell (7 January, 6pm), mambalist Colin Boyle and Saxoplaton perform Gilbert, Henri Pousseur, Hans-Werner Henze, James Wood, Richard Rodney Bennett, John Cage, Iannis Xenakis (7, 7.30pm), The London Philharmonic Youth Orchestra play Britten and Birnswite (7, 7.45pm), Shereley Eyles presents piano works by Frank Martin, Olivier Messiaen, George Benjamin, Peter Sculthorpe, Minam Hyde and more (8, 6pm), a mixture of chamber and instrumental works by György Kurtág, Brian Ferneyhough, Elliott Carter, Aaron Copland (8, 7.30pm), violin and piano works by Michael Finnissy, James MacMillan, Xenakis, Cage (9, 7.30pm), culminating with a recital of pieces by Colin Matthews, Rhian Samuel, Scriabin and Finnissy by pianist Tatiana Papageorgiou and The Tubatena Ensemble (11, 7.30pm). All concerts are in the Purcell Room or Queen Elizabeth Hall, prices vary, info on 0171 960 4242

**Michael Nyman** First chance to hear *Noises, Sounds And Sweet Airs*, the work that arose out of Nyman's score for Peter Greenaway's film *Prospero's Books*. Originally staged as a dance work in Japan by avant garde director Robert Lepage, the work is released in March on Argo. The UK premiere features The Michael Nyman Band with soloists Catherine Bott and Hilary Summers. London Royal Festival



Hall, 30 January, 8pm, tickets/prices tba, 0171 960 4242

### The Rumpus Room

Probably London's most dourly eclectic club celebrates New Year in style with DJs Tom Middleton of Global Communication, T Power and Hal and Dr Rokit from Clear Records, as well as regular club DJs Downstairs at the Albany, Great Portland Street, W1, 31 December, 7pm-late, £7 in advance from Rough Trade, Ambient Soho, Fat Cat, or 0181 556 8925

### Mopomoso

London's longest-running improv club presents a festival for the first three months of 1996. The first dates are as follows: Vanessa Mackness, John Butcher, Phil Minton, Roger Turner (7 January), John Russell, Phil Oumant, John Butcher, Phil Wachsmann, Matt Hutchinson (14), Evan Parker, John Russell, Alan Tomlinson (21), Phil Minton, Vervan Weston, Roger Turner, John Butcher and Lol Coshill (28). The last gig includes Minton's new setting of "Inverrun", based on material by James Joyce, to be released by the Canadian Veto label later in the year. London Red Rose Theatre, 129 Seven Sisters Road, S4 4X3, info from 0181 989 9640

### Creative Jazz Orchestra

The 16 piece big band led by Mike Gibbs tours this month with an unusual programme reflecting their interest in new jazz and contemporary composition. The new line-up includes tubast Oren Marshall and the American drummer Peter Enskine, and the group will be

## TV & Radio

**Arena: The Burger And The King** (BBC2, 1 January, 9pm) Thought you'd overdone it this Christmas? You ain't seen nothing yet. Thrill to this documentary on the outside life and cuisine of Elvis Presley

**Mixing It** (BBC Radio 3, Mondays 10-10pm) No programme on New Year's Eve, but the show returns with an interview with David Toop (18 January), plus a studio session with New York guitar thrasher Elliott Sharp (22)

**Charles Ives** (BBC Radio 3, 19-21 January, times vary) One of the most often-cited but misunderstood composers of the century, Charles Ives, is commemorated in a season devoted to his music at London's Barbican this month. The long weekend comprises concerts, talks, films, free foyer music and an exhibition of photographs. Radio 3 are broadcasting most of the music performed, including *The Unanswered Question*, both Piano Sonatas, String Quartet No. 1, *Central Park in the Dark*, all four symphonies, songs (sung by Owen Upshaw) and various short orchestral works. Tickets for the event are £10/£8 (weekend pass £50) Box Office 0171 638 8891

**Conlon Nanararrow** (BBC Radio 3, 14 January 5.45pm) Long overdue documentary on the American

composer best known for his mechanical player-piano studies. Includes interviews with the man himself

**Misterioso** (BBC Radio 3, from 15 January, 4-30pm) Six part series about jazz pianist/composer Thelonious Monk, presented by Ian Carr

**The Chill Out Zone** (Kiss 100 FM, Thursdays 1-4am/Sundays 6-7am) Germany's Source Records, San Francisco's Jonah Sharp and Hull's Pork Recordings mix it live on Paul Thomas's show

**Ruff Kutz** (Kiss 100 FM, Wednesdays 9-11pm) OJ Hype, Kenny Ken, LTJ Bukem and others keep the drum 'n' bass beats rotating. This is the information centre

**Coldcut** (Kiss 100 FM, Saturdays 1-3am) Oh anyone not like their recent *Journeys By DJ* mix CD? Hear it happening in real time every Saturday night

**Disengage** (Kiss 102 FM, Manchester, Saturday-Sunday 4-6am) No restrictions on Autodrive's weekly dose of madness (if you're still awake)

**Clive Craske** (Christmas FM, Brighton area, Saturdays 1am) At the outer limits of late night noise

performing a selection of works by Mark-Anthony Turnage, Charles Ives, Mike Gibbs and Oliver Knussen. Tour dates are Southampton Turner Sims Hall (30 January), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (31), Bristol St George's, Brandon Hall (1 February), Manchester RNIM (2), Birmingham Adnan Boulit Hall (3) and Leicester Phoenix (4)

**The China Pig** East London's foremost forum for all things unapologetically comes home to roost for five double bills this month. First up are the Franco Luce/Paul Rutherford/Aron Jolly trio plus Dave Draper (Invisible String Quartet) (2 January), then George Hozumi/Luz Hodgson share the stage with Roland Bates, Annabelle Simmons and Steve Noble (9), Antics and double bassist Peter Gacquesman (16), Nada (featuring the Mongolian-inspired overtone singing of Michael Ormiston) with The Wire's Clive Bell on tunes and shakuhachi (23), and finally Woodentaps (featuring trumpeter Roland Ramanan, Maggie Nichols on vocals and Michael Garcia on 'slicon mailer') pair off with Conspiracy/Morphogenesis stalwart

Adam Bohman (30). London Vories, S4/E3, info on 0181 986 1059

**Metalheadz** The winter palace of progressive drum 'n' bass first Sunday Session of the New Year is on 7 January at London's Blue Note, with DJs Kennedy & Storm, Peshay, Doc Scott, Fabio, Groovenderv and Gok spinning it sharp and dark. 7pm-

midnight, £7/£4 members, get there early. Box Office and info on 0171 729 B440

**The Wireless** Another club that's come to prominence over the last few months with a wide-ranging music policy from jazz, post-rock, hip-hop, psychedelia, drum 'n' bass and progressive electronic music, and where





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**CHRONICLE**





## Live In Brief

**Ntshuks Bonga** South African prodigy in trio with Maggie Nichols and Mark Sanders. London Jazz Rumours, Vortex, 7 January, £4/£3, D171 254 6516

**Hugh Masekela** South African trumpeter rounds off Africa 95. London Royal Festival Hall, 19 January, 7-30pm, D171 960 4242

**Perfect Houseplants** Hue Warren's jazz oddballs team up with folk singer June Tabor (Glasgow Folk Concert Hall, 8 January) and in concert in their own right (Leicester Phoenix, 13, D116 255 5627)

**Keith Tippett** Solo set from the majesty of the wories London Jazz Cafe, 7 January, £10/£8, D171 344 3444.

**Tortoise** Chicago avant-rockers come out of hibernation Bristol Theatre (22 January), London Splash Club (23, D171 278 3879)

**Steve Williamson** The saxophonist links up with The London Community Gospel Choir to perform "Revelations — Journey To Truth" — London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 9 January, 7-45pm, £12.50/£10, D171 960 4242

did they get that name from? With visuals from a leading London film workshop, it's the perfect place to check out the latest musical eclectica Upstairs at the Garage, 25 January, 8pm-2am, £4/£3 (£2 before 10pm), info on D181 340 0332

**The Rhythmic** Highlights at the capital's largest jazz venue include The Archie Shepp Quartet (8-11 January), the rarely seen saxophonist/pianist Sam Rivers with his trio (12-13), Wolfgang Muthspiel (21) and Dave O'Higgins's 'Under The Stone' (31). The Rhythmic, 89-91 Chapel Market, N1, doors open 7pm, ticket prices vary, Box Office D171 713 5859

**Anokha** Second night of Indian crossover club instigated by percussionist Tavish Singh, whose tables and string arrangements have been heard on any number of records including Björk, Little Axe and Massive Attack. The club will soon be linked to Bombay via an ISDN connection, making possible a Future Sound Of India jam in real time between musicians in London and Bombay across a distance of 5000 miles. January's pow-wow features music from Talvin, Spring Heel Jack, Earth Tribe and State Of Bengal, plus DJs MC Navigator, Rocket, Egon Zo, Nelson Olson and more. 218-220 Holloway Road, London (The Rocket as was), 7 January, 5-11pm, £7/£5, info on 0181 675 5047

**Resonance** New issue of the LMC organ is available now, with articles on Alvin Lucier, Marshall Allen, Plunderphonics, Improv on the Internet,



Spring Heel Jack

Van Dyke Parks, plus CD reviews. Look out for a number of LMC gigs in the winter months, including the reformation of Eddie Prevost's Supersession, zowie!trance with Evan Parker, David Shea, Stock, Hausen &

Walkman, Ben Neill and DJ Spooky. Main with Max Eastley, and other delights. Full details in the February issue of *The Wire*. Resonance available for £3.50 from LMC, 60 Farringham Road, London EC1R 3BP □

### The Office Ambience

**Rising** — Yoko Ono & Irma (Capitol)  
**The New Folk Sound Of Terry Callier** — Terry Callier (BGP)  
**Millions New Living Will Never Die** — Tortoise (Crystalline)  
**Rien** — Faust (Table Of The Elements)  
**Heat 4** — Neil (Capitol Trip Records)  
**Plunk For Rabbits** — Howie B (Polygram)  
**The Last Days** — Gavin Bryars/Balanced Quartet (Argo)  
**Swarm Of Drones** — Various (Sombient/Asphodel)  
**Theory Of Silent Phase** — Silent Phase (Transmit/R&S)  
**Parrot** — Gorm (GPR)  
**Ray Night** — Kousokyo (Forced Exposure)  
**Western Quietest** — Ennio Morricone (DRG)  
**Still Smoker** — Various (Ganja/Prongline)  
 Compiled by The Wire, Sound System

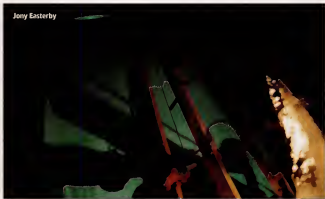
## GERM PARROT

New album. Released on 4th December 1995. Available on double vinyl and compact disc throughout The Network. GPR ☎ gpr e-mail: gpr@feedback.com



Earthtribe

Jony Easterby



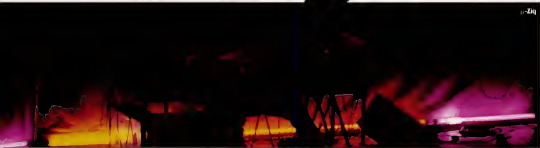
I began with the scraped strings of contemporary chamber group instrumental, and ended three weeks later with the twin needles of Alex Reece. By the morning of the third and final Transgressions — three November nights of Wire-sponsored New Music, club culture, film and installation in Central London — there was a queue for tickets stretching as far as you could see out of the door of London's Rough Trade shop, and our only regret was that there wasn't room in Community Music House for many more people.

Still, those that did squeeze in had their patience and curiosity multiply rewarded. Between grooving to fusionoid beatboxes courtesy of London's Rumpus Room and Cafe Party, getting your head around soaring improv from trumpeter Andy Diagram and The Steve Noble Trio, and immersing yourself in the visual

fantasies of Scanner, Funko Porcini, Letpke and The Exploding Cinema, there were great live antics on the main stage, pictured here. Where else could you hear the entropic sci-fi collages of DJ Spooky, Frances-Hane Uff's metallic cello improvisations, the dramatic harnessing of the elements in the sculptures of Jony Easterby, Pram's cheeky mantra-rock, Earthtribe's passionate global Techno, Otomo Yoshihide's sonic butchery and Mike Paradinas's electronic maximalism, all on the same platform? In your dreams, that's where

*Special thanks to Pete Leigh at the Chill Out label, Andrew Mackenzie at the London Arts Board, Dave O'Donnell at Community Music and everyone else who helped. We look forward to Community Music House functioning as a fully licenced venue in 1996.*

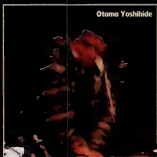
# transgress



Ziq

Frances Marie Uitti

# ions



# bites

## Germ

"He lives above his studio, so you can ring him any time. He's always there, working away on something." The voice on the end of the phone belongs to a spokesperson for the York-based Techno label GPR. They are referring to Tim Wright, a musician who releases records of consistently inventive electronic music for GPR under the name Germ.

So is Wright another of Richard James's "bedroom bories"? A Techno-hermit whose life experience has been confined to creating music in claustrophobic back rooms? It only by the luminous glow of an Atari computer screen?

"That's how I started out," he says when I speak to him two days later. "At home with a synth, an effects unit, a few tape machines, but I've tried to get away from that. It's not much fun. Having played in a number of dysfunctional bands in my teens, I still enjoy working alone, but the people I work with now I have a lot of respect for: we all trust each other. Working with other musicians is more interesting: ideas get developed a lot more and a lot quicker."

Germ, Wright is quick to inform me, is actually a group, consisting of Tim, trombonist Hilary Jeffrey, double bass player Matt Miles and engineer Jon Dalby (whose 1994 GPR EP "Skil'N' Frank" remains a highlight of recent Techno culture). The group's new Parrot album also features a cameo appearance by Nicholas Bullen (ex-Scorn). The album credits, however, suggest that Wright is the creative nucleus of this particular viral cluster.

Wright grew up in Birmingham, studied classical piano, moved to Manchester to do a physics degree in 1988 where he heard BOB Slate, then moved to York in 1990 to attend a music technology course.

"[On the course] I was doing a lot of sophisticated stuff," he says. "We were using very powerful computers, writing a lot of electroacoustic type stuff on a silicon graphics machine. That's fallen away now as we've got more MIDI-based."

Interestingly, Wright was exposed to the austere world of academic electroacoustic composition at an early age. "In Birmingham there's an organisation called BEAST. It's a

kind of electroacoustic sound theatre, attached to the university. I first heard a purely electronic piece by them when I was about 12. They do quite a lot of work with schools. I've got very vivid memories of it. I just shut my eyes and drifted, imagining aeroplanes taking off and balls bouncing around."

The images generated by the music on Parrot aren't suggestive of aircraft taking off or bouncing balls so much as the rusted hulks of deep space probes being dismantled in their hangars by oxyacetylene torch-welding cyber-mechanics, ball lightning imploding over suburban shopping sheds. One inspiration for Germ's particular brand of overloaded cyborg funk came from a familiar source.

"On-U Sound. That was a very strong influence: the beauty and power of the sound, the variety of the vocabulary they used, there was a real excitement about the way they experimented with textures as well as very strong dance rhythms."

A couple of days before I speak to Wright, Germ had travelled down to London to perform one of their infrequent live sets. "It was a disaster," he says. "Whenever we play down south we get treated like imbeciles." For Wright, the impulse to transpose his music from the laboratory environment of the studio to a live arena is strong but thwarted by the lack of receptive venues. "We have problems because what we do isn't dance music as such, and we haven't got the following where we can do gigs in our own right, so we end up getting put in clubs. We usually go down well but we can't fall foul of the club crowd. When we play live 90 per cent of the material is re-written. We're not trying to recreate the studio."

**TONY HERRINGTON** Parrot is out now on GPR (through Pinnacle)

## Anthony Manning

Here's the dilemma: 25 year old with synth, sequencer, drum machine, composes with graphic scores, listens to Beethoven String Quartets, has never heard any 20th century composition, is signed to an experimental Techno label.

"I got fed up with buying the same structures over and over again," says Anthony Manning, recalling a period of musical research in which he felt he ought to be purchasing the kind of electronic dance music made by his contemporaries. "If you're at all interested in creating complex melody and harmony, it requires a bit more forethought."

Think of Anthony Manning's polymeric synth mosaics as compositions, mini-suites, and you're on the way to realising how far outside the mainstream he's currently wading. When it appeared in 1994, his debut *Islets in Pink Polypropylene* sounded like chaos made audible, except the entire album was not only composed in advance by means of Manning's own graphic scores, but was realised on a single instrument — a Roland RR8 drum machine.

"Those pieces came about by 50 per cent fluke and 50 per cent working back into it," he says of that first effort. "Huge amounts of information were stripped away and reworked."

Manning's music arrives as the result of countless hours refining the sounds of well-chosen instruments — for his new album, *Chromium Nebulae*, he adds synthesizers and natural location recordings. "The equipment produced at the moment comes with the kinds of sounds that are necessarily limited in order to appeal to a certain market that is going to buy them," he says. "But behind those initial preset sounds that come from the factory there is enormous scope in more refined instruments to create quite stunning, more



human sounds than is immediately apparent."

Chromium Nebulae is, he admits, "A working set of sketches, I've been trying to get used to working with keyboards. And trying to work out why certain passages worked and certain didn't, in terms of musical notation." This doesn't mean it's a throwaway project. The smudgy bass sonorities, unfamiliar tone colours, copious layers of digital reverb and stilled, languid rhythms place it in the same abstract bracket as Main's Hz EPs, Mark Clifford's *Disjecta* project, even the computer-aided compositions of Jonathan Harvey and Tod Machover. I ask if it's hard to make this music. "No, hard is the wrong word," he replies. "It's taxing, and it's enjoyable for that, it gives you a very great kick in the same way that you get a kick when you solve a problem of any kind. It's quite addictive."

Later, Manning opens up about his growing fascination with systems and music's place within them. "If you look beyond icons that stand up within popular culture, to systems of more permanence and more economic ruggedness, then you inevitably tend to end up looking at natural forms, and natural phenomena tend to have a great purposefulness to them that lends a kind of clarity and balance to thought. If you let your mind wander into what it is that these things are doing, as against just seeing a plant, you get into thinking, 'Well, that plant serves its purpose: it dishes out the water to the bees, and the bees do this, and the water does that.' You see it as a huge great churning thing that works, perfectly, and you can't help but be inspired to create something out of the ordinary, that can be judged by those kind of standards." **BOB YOUNG**  
*Chromium Nebulae is released this month on Intel (through RTM/DISC)*

## DJ Hype

"I would call myself a true player," affirms DJ Hype, one of the perennial figures on the UK drum 'n' bass scene. This, Hype explains, is due to the fact that he makes music, releases it on his own label, Gang Records, DJs three nights a week, and co-hosts the weekly Ruff Kutz show on London's Kiss FM. "The only thing I don't do in this scene is put on a rave," he says. But ironically, that's how he started out.

In 1985, aged 17, Hype owned a sound system called Heatwave with 5nut Up And Dance's PJ and Smiley and their brothers, putting on dances around Hackney in East London. "In those days I used to make the speaker boxes, find the venues, do everything and earn next to nothing out of it," he says. "They were successful raves but they were like blues [dances]. We would kick off the door and have a liver [entity]."

Hype taught himself to scratch and mix on two turntables without the standard vinyl record controls, and a mixer with no crossfader. The Heatwave sound switched from playing one-deck reggae to two-deck reggae, soul and HipHop. It folded in 1987 when Hype started to enter mix competitions, winning the London Mix Championship and reaching the DMC semi-finals

At this time he was recording tracks on the most basic home set-up, cutting loops on turntables live and dubbing them straight to four-track tape then overlaying basslines, samples, and vocals from DJ Daddy. (The two still work together: Daddy chats on the latest Gang single "Rise Up")

When the rave scene exploded in 1988 Hype was DJing on pirate station Fantasy FM. "I used to get breakbeats off albums by people like Mark 45 King and JVC Force, speed them up and mix them with the House tracks of that time to give it the breakbeat feel."

In 1990 he was introduced to Peter Harris of Kickin Records and became the label's A&R man and in-house producer, co-writing and producing tracks by The Scientist, including "The Exorcist" and "The Bee", two of the biggest underground dance cuts of the year.

Perhaps due to his mixed experiences during the first boom-to-bust trajectory of rave (the relationship with Kickin' ended in acrimony), Hype has maintained a relatively low profile throughout the second coming of breakbeat culture. Unlike Goldie, DJ Gyst or Alex Reece, all of whom are now signed to major labels, his activities have remained strictly underground. However, this month sees the release of *Sil Smokin'*, a compilation album which showcases the kind of minimal, rough-hewn tracks

that have been sneaking out over recent months on Gang and its sister label Frontline (run by fellow Jungle Pascal).

"We could have done an album when the whole Jungle explosion happened, but I didn't want to get into that. I wanted to see what happened, see who the true players are, see who sticks with it. This album, to the best of our knowledge, is a true interpretation of what we're doing with Gang and Frontline. It's all new material that's been previously unavailable on 12", but has been on dub throughout the year."

Live and on vinyl, Hype's mixing skills set him apart, and like all great DJs, he has an intuitive understanding of the symbiotic relationship that exists between DJ, crowd and music. "The two run in parallel," he says, elaborating on the relationship between his work as a producer and a DJ. "I make music to play out. I think if I stopped DJing I could go into it a lot deeper than I do. I was doing more experimental stuff back in 1993 on 12's I did for SubBase [such as his first single "Shot In The Drum"] where I was scratching basslines. But at present, the only thing I'm trying to do with my music is make it so I can play it out, and that's because I'm a DJ." **CHRIS CAMPION** *Sil Smokin'* is released this month on Gang/Frontline. Ruff Kutz is broadcast in London on Kiss 100 FM, Weds 9-11pm.





## Bang On A Can

"Sexy, unstoppable and loud" is how New York's Bang On A Can festival describes its six-piece in-house ensemble, The Bang On A Can All-Stars. In days when classical music is increasingly subject to the same type of soundtrack that afflicts any product, what does this enliven show? That the Festival's founding composers — David Lang, Julia Wolfe and Michael Gordon — have an ear for the tunes of marketing? Well, yes... and much more.

Started in 1987 by the three Yale music school graduates as a robust attempt to desecrate modern classical music, the annual festival was initially very much a downtown affair. The programming was vigorous, mixing Milton Babbitt with Steve Reich, the aim was to draw out parallels, discontinuities, to make people actively listen. Audiences loved it; sell-out houses followed. Composers from John Cage downwards recognised the festival's vitality. And so too did the city's up-market Lincoln Centre venue, to which the festival moved last year.

"It's posh," says Michael Gordon of the Lincoln. "It's very posh," says Julia Wolfe. "And it also has no history in terms of new things. I won't say we were going into a wasteland, but in terms of New Music, there was nothing being done there. We were the only composers under 65 and living that they were promoting."

The effect of the move to the Lincoln has been a minor change of focus. While the festival receives the support of many established composers (Reich is writing a piece for The All-Stars), its founders feel the responsibility to use the new space to champion newer, younger composers. In a similar way, The Spot Orchestra — the festival's new, in-house orchestra which Gordon describes as "a funky lot who look like a scruffy rock band and play like virtuosi" — exists to give young composers a shot at the big sound which is usually prohibitively expensive.

Gordon sees music history in terms of economy. "In the 18th century, composers worked for the aristocracy and a small group of patrons. They didn't have to worry about a public. With the breakdown of the aristocracy, the role of a composer with the public and in public changed. Halls became bigger, the spectacles, the orchestras were expensive. I think the whole of the 20th century has been about retreating from the public, art for art's sake. We're turning the other way. Seeing Philip Glass's and Steve Reich's

success in creating an audience means that we can live in the world. And if we sometimes have to take odd-jobs like copying music or giving piano lessons, that's still a thousand times more attractive than teaching music theory."

It all begs the question: are audiences created or merely catered for? Both, suggests Wolfe. On the one hand, The All-Stars do specialise in a user-friendly dynamism that will draw anyone seriously interested in the transmission of music and its ideas. On the other hand, she recognises that broadcasting and multiculturalism have created a world in which a diversity of sound is a given. She describes "Luck", a nine minute work on industry, the first All-Stars CD to emerge from an deal with Sony Classical, as having a base in James Brown and ♪ Michael Gordon describes the "tube screamer" used by cellist Mayya Beiser on the album's title track as a distorting gadget most often found plugged into rock guitars.

Any fears that the festival and its outcroppings will be diluted by the Lincoln association are dismissed. The Bangers retain full control, and any suggestion that they themselves are moving from a position of radicalism to the safety of an established status quo is given an equally short shrift. "Glass and Reich may now be played in mainstream halls," says Wolfe, using the example of how those composers broke from the conservatories to create their own downtown audience in the 60s. "In any case, they're both still writing. They're both, to my mind, radical and open to new ideas." **LOUISE GRAY** Industry is released by Sony Classical this month. The Bang On A Can All-Stars play the UK this month: see *Sounding Off* for details. The next Bang On A Can Festival takes place in New York in June.



## Hugh Hopper

"All the Soft Machine albums have been made available and people are picking up on them again — they'd forgotten about them for 15 years." Bassist Hugh Hopper has been active in the overlap of the jazz and rock worlds for a long time, ever since he formed Soft Machine with Robert Wyatt and Mike Ratledge in the mid-60s, in fact. Since leaving the group in 1973, it seemed Hopper too was in danger of being forgotten, his creative energies reduced to a footnote in the history of UK Progressive and jazz rock. But during the last year or so, a spate of new projects have put him back squarely in the frame. Recent collaborative albums include *Adreamor*, a set of improvisations with guitarist Mark Hewins, and projects with Kramer and the Oregon-based group Caveamen Shoestore. Forthcoming is a project of songs co-written with vocalist Lisa Smith-Klossner, which Hopper describes as "slightly dark, not really classifiable".

"When you start off in music, you've got very strong ideas of your own," he says when I ask him if he enjoys the collaborative process, "and you think, 'I really want to do this', and it's hard to work with people — I always say it's a miracle that bands stay together. I found out as I got older — and probably wiser — I enjoyed other people's input more than I used to."

"Different people have asked me to do things for different reasons," he continues. "Kramer, I think, asked me because he liked that slightly mad, frenetic fuzz [bass] sound. It's interesting that people ask you for their own reasons, not for your reasons. They've got their own fantasy. I'm sometimes a bit worried that I'm disappointing somebody if they ask me to do a session and it's not what they wanted. But by now it's too bad. I do what I do anyway."

Hopper's distinctive bass guitar style is intensely rhythmic. He's always been interested in experimenting with the instrument's sound — speeding it up, running it backwards, looping it, feeding it through distorting devices — but even in his free improvisations, rhythm seems a crucial presence.

"I like rhythmic things," he says. "It doesn't have to be straight 4/4, it can be some kind of weird pulse, but that is an important part of my music. To a lot of improvisers it's not, it's more important to be an expressionist."

One of the reasons that Hopper's recent spate of activity raises his profile in the UK is that he concentrates most of his activity abroad, mainly out of necessity.

"It's always been like that, even with Soft Machine, we played a lot of gigs in England, but there was always much more enthusiasm in Europe. I hardly ever play in England now."

"In some ways, places like France or Germany are more serious about culture — it's not a thing to be ashamed of to say you're a musician or a poet or an artist. But in Britain if you say that, they say, 'Yeah, that's a hobby, but what do you do for a living?'"

**PRICE BARNES** *Adreamor* and Caveamen Shoestore are out now on Impetus (through Impetus) and Tim Kerr Records (through Cargo) respectively.

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CHARLES SERRA MURRAY

The undertow of pop memories always leaves our minds with a driftwood of musical recall, images that seem destined to live only in the past. Take Bill Nelson: most of us have heard the name, remembered it, reprocessed it, reproduced it in the course of other things seen or heard. Bill Nelson? Erm... BeBop Deluxe, *Ships In The Night*, a mate of Eno or something?

Nelson has been in creative English rock's shadow ever since he and his group BeBop Deluxe were touted as the 70s alchemists who would distill the compositional ambition of Progressive rock into a new strain of innovative British pop music. Nelson could be cast as a 70s Jarvis Cocker, a photogenic and skilled manipulator of musical and textual tradition. But then enter punk. BeBop Deluxe became a blameless part of the collateral damage of 1977 and Nelson was condemned to the same dark purgatory as the Prog rock doodlers he'd always avoided. Any remotely savvy UK music watcher has been looking over his or her shoulder at Nelson ever since, half-expecting a triumphant return.

He's spent his exile creatively, in a frenzy of activity



# five finger satellite

whose extent is as impressive as its neglect is problematic. "After BeBop split, I was at a loose end," he explains over the phone from his home in Yorkshire. "I started my own label for my own music back in 1980. Coteau Records. Since then I've produced, oh, about 30 solo albums?"

Nelson's most recent release is *My Secret Studio*, a 4CD box set which, he blithely informs me, is only part one of a series.

"It's all unreleased music recorded at home between BB and 92 — very basic, no polishing, improvised onto tape. I was spitting with my previous manager and undergoing a divorce which meant that I couldn't use the house with the studio where I'd been recording. They're not songs explicitly about what was going on, but insofar as they released tension they're quite personal things."

Nelson is hesitant about locating his new material in any context. "Warped pop music, I suppose. Very direct, but, well, not straightforward pop music. I don't know. A lot of things I think are straightforward, other people think they are really strange."

On *My Secret Studio* Nelson makes a fearless forage into the scattergun rhythms of drum 'n' bass. The marriage of breakbeat culture and English rock lyrics is an odd but radiant one, but it is also an appropriate update of his enduring and mutually-nourishing fascination for technology and the musical ideas its development can implant in the minds of listeners and players.

"Most of my stuff's improvised. I don't read or write

Pop Art, Progressive rock, multimedia installations, breakbeat culture — it all comes together in **Bill Nelson's** secret studio. Interview by Paul Stump

music. People think it's fairly academic, but it isn't. Harold Budd, for example, scores everything. When we played together, he'd nod when we started and I'd nod when we finished."

Nelson's ascetic, almost monastic devotion to extracting new sounds from, and new contexts for, the electric guitar invites comparison with that other great English guitar eccentric, Robert Fripp. "Robert and I share the same management. Players like him, Derek Bailey and Fred Frith always had more of an effect on my playing than your average axe hero."

The visual aspect of music must surely be important to anyone who ornaments albums with titles like *Chance Encounters In The Garden Of Lights*. True enough, Nelson has soundtracked extensively and recently moved into installation sound-sculpting with the *Crimsworth* project. "The visual influences come from all over the place, from Coteau, naturally, from Welles — and loud dreaming, the space between sleep and waking where images come spontaneously."

"The painterly thing is something I can't shake off. I was at art school in the 60s. Most of my contemporaries ended up playing on records, too. A lot of the changes in visual arts at the time, like Pop Art, seemed to influence people playing music at the same

time. I remember doing incidental music for a production of *Peter Gyrnt* and I was using John Cage's prepared piano techniques — but applying them to guitar and tape manipulation."

"I'd love to do a CD-ROM. I'm trying to set my own studio up computer-wise as best as possible. I'm interested, I'm aware of what's going on in the extraordinarily rich visual potential. It's ripe for development and it'll be more and more available to painters as the cost of the technology falls."

Nelson can't talk for long — he's got too much to do. A new *Channel Light Vessel* album, with Roger Eno and Kate St John, plus a new solo release, *When The Satellite Sings*, are both imminent. "There are other things I'm working on with DAT and back-projection for live work. But live concerts are so expensive."

It's not easy getting someone who burns such a furious path into the future to talk about the past. When I ask him about BeBop Deluxe, he says: "It was almost a fluke that it took off in the way that it did, because my tastes have always been towards the fringe and I'd always wanted to introduce them into a more mainstream context... broaden the whole thing out a little bit." □ *My Secret Studio* is out now on Voicepro/Resonance (through Vital)





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From erotic obsession to existential angst, **Peter Dlegvad's** songs offer a vivid commentary on the contemporary human condition. Interview by Phil England

# mad cow stories



With the current spread of alien electronic-based musics, the multiplicity of hydra-headed fusions, and the increased meditation by recording, what future is there for the singer-songwriter?

In conversation, Peter Dlegvad is quick to refute the suggestion that songwriting is a dying art. Certainly Dlegvad's own work, with its resonant commentary on the contemporary human condition, is ample justification of the form's continuing relevance.

In concert, Dlegvad provides a "ritual of a kind of mental hygiene," an emotional tour de force that ranges across such subjects as erotic obsession, death and the void, the inward-looking nature of couples, commitment, temptation and dreams about bees.

"A lot of the time the lyrics of my songs are singing the undesirable — the sort of things I would never dare to say soberly," he suggests. "For example, 'Waste Of Time' is about the way everything — even the most sublime — is just a waste of time. There is this devil in us that sometimes believes this. It's a completely nihilistic view, but once it's uttered, everybody feels better. It's like after a storm, the air is that much fresher."

Dlegvad endeavors to remove anything that is exclusively personal from his songs lending them a universal quality that is extended by his fondness for allegory and the possibility of multiple readings. This is one of a number of qualities that sets Dlegvad apart from contemporaries and influences such as Liz Phair, Richard Thompson, the early blues singers, Butch Hancock, Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan, Robin Williams and The Incredible String Band.

"I try to condense the energy in the songs in different ways. I have a basic belief that our sense that we are in control is an illusion and the real action is taking place beneath the surface. In composing the lyrics I try and suggest an occult movement beneath the action that I describe. Otherwise you're just getting journalism or superficial reportage that wouldn't bear repeated listening. For me, composing lyrics is an act of maneuvering yourself into a receptive state where open-ended images occur to you and you feel there's a richness of potential association."

Dream imagery is another recurrent feature of Dlegvad's lyrics with the sublime slipping into the absurd and vice versa. His interest in dreams and the

unconscious is profound, some years ago, as an act of "outsider science," he taught himself to talk in his sleep into a voice-activated tape recorder.

In contrast to such weighty, literary collaborations as 1977's *Kew Rhine* (which Dlegvad says was "designed in my imagination to put an end to pop music in the way that Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* was designed to kill painting"), Dlegvad's recent solo work exhibits a deceptive simplicity and a devout attachment to rhyme. It also stands in contrast to his earlier work with groups such as Faust, Slapp Happy, Henry Cow and John Zorn's *Locus Solus*.

The latest addition to the canon is *Just Wake Up*, his fifth solo album. The record is true to Dlegvad's live performances, with straightforward embellishments from a small group and a handful of guest musicians including drummer Chris Cutler and slide guitarist BJ Cole.

"I've worked with some really great producers [including Picasso of pop! Andy Partridge from XTC], and one or two producers who were just wrong for the project. Now I'm pretty much bent on the idea of working without producers, in this area that is more 'folk,' more direct."

The son of a painter and children's book illustrator, and himself a producer of free-standing artworks, Dlegvad has for the last four years been making a living as a cartoonist for the independent *On Sunday* magazine. With such diverse artistic leanings, it is perhaps not surprising to learn that at university he empathized with the figure of William Blake.

"I thought in order to be an artist I've got to have vision, like William Blake. I thought I should go mad. I worked myself into such a state of solitude that I stopped functioning really. When I couldn't handle it any more I sought psychiatric help. And it was a revelation. After an hour with a very wise professional listening without raising an eyebrow to my torrent of complaints, I said, 'Do you think I'm going mad, doctor?' You know, hopefully. And he said, 'No, no, no. You're not mad. You're just very immature.' And it brought me to earth with such a bump that I shot out of there and went straight to Venice on the next train out and had a wonderful series of beatnik adventures. It was an awakening."

Dlegvad is now an apparently sane, well-adjusted father with two kids (when I arrive at his house for the interview he was in the middle of some home DIY), but he still feels an attachment to the romantic notion of madness or psychic exploration offering a potential existential rebirth. "I guess it's just a sort of permanent adolescence of wanting to challenge what I think is authority. And it isn't just the institutions, political or otherwise in the world, it's your own infantile sense of right and wrong and good taste and bad taste. I don't trust any of that stuff. That's what my work, I think, is trying to challenge and explore." □ *Peter Dlegvad plays at London's Union Chapel on 3 February. Just Wake Up is out now on R&R Recommended.*



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fluids > fugitive sex act > immersed in music

> oceanic ecstasies > surf guitars >

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Tested by Mike Barnes

Composer Gavin Bryars was born in Gooles, Yorkshire in 1943. In the 60s he played double bass in a Sheffield-based jazz trio with Derek Bailey and Tony Oxley — an association which developed into the improvising trio Josef Haidbrooke. He has spent many years concurrently composing and lecturing. His work has always been closely linked with conceptual art and has drawn on sources as diverse as football and 'paraphysics'. One of Bryars's most notorious side-projects was the formation in 1970 of The Portsmouth Sinfonia, an orchestra of musical amateurs. His breakthrough came when he recorded *The Sinking Of The Titanic* and *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* for Brian Eno's Obscure label in 1975. A 1992 re-recording of *Jesus' Blood* featured Tom Waits. Since his 1984 opera *Mexico*, directed by Robert Wilson, Bryars has tended towards more ambitious, richly textured works. In recent years he has written pieces for guitarist Bill Frisell, saxophonist Evan Parker, The Hilliard Ensemble, The Arditi and Balanescu Quartets, and most recently cellist Julian Lloyd-Webber.

## TOM WAITS

**"Somewhere" from *Blue Valentine* (WEA)**

Well so far it's "Somewhere There's A Place For Us" from *West Side Story*. Ah, it's Tom Waits. A sensational version. There's one phrase where he sounds like Louis Armstrong, a little twist in his voice. Tom Waits is a genius.

**What do you particularly like about this version of the song?**

I like the song in any case. It must have been the early 60s, I suppose, when I first saw it [*West Side Story*]. The guy who sang it in the original, Richard Baer, is in *Twin Peaks*, he plays the part of the guy who owns the store and the Great Northern Hotel [Ben Horne].

It's supposed to be a fairly poignant moment in the film, fairly sad and a kind of pivotal thing and there's that sort of quality of a blues singer doing it, through Tom. And although he's singing in a very relaxed way — it's probably one of his most relaxed performances — there's still that edge, that intensity and that poignancy in his voice. Tom is just a sensational singer and a great composer too.

**How did you come to use him on the re-recording of *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*?**

In a roundabout way. Tom first got in touch with me in the 80s when he was touring, to see if he could get a copy of the [original recording of] *Jesus' Blood* on Obscure, because he'd lost his copy and he said it was his favourite record — which is actually high praise.

When I came to [re]do it [on Philip Glass's Point Label], I think Philip Glass thought I was going to do it the length of the original, which was 25 minutes. I said, 'No, I want to do a whole CD of it.' What I had to do in making that was to have a much richer scenario, so the music goes through more phases. The way this whole piece was mapped out, everything that we'd had throughout the whole piece was accompanying the old man's pre-recorded voice, no one actually plays the tune. It struck me that maybe at some point somebody should join in. I got in touch with Tom and he agreed to do it.

We made a promotional video [for the piece] and he tells this story about when he first heard it. It was his wife's birthday and the party was over and people were gone — empty champagne bottles and balloons and streamers lying about — and they had the radio playing. The piece started to play and he said, 'Holy

shit, what's that?' They held hands and he was crying the whole way through. So when he sang it, it was really personal to him. And his performance of it, that was one of the great musical moments for me, being in the studio with him. He realised that he'd just do it with me, the engineer and nobody else.

## EVAN PARKER

**"Not Backwards, As In Doubt" from *50th Birthday Concert* (Leo)**

I'll probably be miles out here, it doesn't sound quite right to me, but it sounds like the Evan Parker trio [with] Barry Guy and Tony Oxley. But the sax playing sometimes doesn't sound like Evan — the early part when he was playing slightly more rhapsodically. I prefer Evan playing solo concerts and then he's playing more wall-of-sound stuff. Now I recognise it, the Coltrane tone influence, Evan always was an enormously knowledgeable Coltrane freak.

I lived next door to him. We each had a one room flat — he had his wife and son in there as well — on the top floor of this hotel in Kilburn. I heard him practising the sax all day, or playing John Coltrane records. And it was the time that I developed a kind of hatred of jazz and we had a very interesting love-hate relationship.

**Is free improvisation a style of music that you'll be likely to play again, or have your other styles taken precedence?**

They have really. But it nearly happened fairly recently. I was touring in Japan with my ensemble in September, and I got a message from a guy in Los Angeles that Derek and Tony Oxley were playing a duo set in Santa Monica and would I be prepared to fly from Tokyo to Los Angeles and play a couple of sessions with them to reform this trio [Josef Haidbrooke], which hadn't played for 29 years. It was set up with a radio broadcast and everything, but I was taken ill in Tokyo and had to be flown back to England so I had to get in touch to cancel. And coincidentally, the same day Derek phoned in to cancel as he was ill in England, so it all fell apart. In principle I don't object to doing it, it's not what I'd do naturally by choice, but it was set up. I wouldn't say no. I seldom say no to anything.

## ARVO PÄRT

**Extract from *Miserere* (ECM)**

It's by Arvo but I don't recognise it.

**It's an extract from *Miserere*.**

I thought it might be when I heard the

soprano I thought it sounded like Sarah Leonard. I've got the recording but it's one I haven't listened to very much. I'd forgotten the percussion, that's what threw me.

**It's interesting that Pärt, who's thought of as being quite solemn and austere, used electric guitar and bass on this piece.** I remember David James from The Hilliard Ensemble said he was slightly nervous when he heard that the instrumentation included electric guitar, but it's very cleverly blended in. It becomes like another orchestral instrument.

Anvo is obviously a very spiritual man and his music can sound rather austere — it can also sound very sensual sometimes. One of the reasons that he probably did this is he has a fantastic ear. He's got a very good sense of orchestration, a very good sense of how to get effects. I think that comes from the years he worked as a sound engineer on the radio in Tallinn. It was just his imagination saying, "That is what I should do." And his imagination is usually pretty darn accurate.

I love Anvo as a person. When his music was first heard in the West, the major impact was the ECM recording of *Frates*, and that was just a revelation everyone had to re-evaluate how something that sounded almost ancient could be contemporary. Anvo is someone with modern ears and a refreshing sense of direction.

**Do you think that the "Holy Minimalist" tag that is put on Pärt, Tavener and Gorecki, is a true reflection of some spiritual yearning by both composers and public, or is it simply a marketing exercise?**

In some American record stores they have a bin which is labelled "Faith Minimalism." That's where you get those guys. A couple of times I've almost been put into that, with some of the things I've done with The Hilliard Ensemble. But when people realise I'm not a Christian, not even remotely, then I get dropped into a different bin.

**Atheist Minimalism?**

Well it's more of a mixture of agnosticism and Buddhism really, so I'm kind of neutral. I don't deny that people have spiritual experiences and that music can be part of that, but I don't try and mix it. I think that sometimes there are some areas of musical composition where it can be slightly opportune to write in that way it almost became a vague. [But] Anvo is the real thing. He's the genuine article.

## THE BEATLES

**"Goodnight" from The White Album (EMI/Parlophone)**

[Immediately] Oh, it's time to say goodnight! Is it Ringo singing? It's a beautiful track, a great arrangement. That French horn there is fantastic. Is it the end of *The White Album*? Lovely album. When [producer Hal Wilner] did the Walt Disney album *Sleep Awake*, they finished with Ringo singing in a similar arrangement to this, "When You Wish Upon A Star." A very similar kind of quality.

It's a nice irony. Ringo is probably the one person out of the four you wouldn't expect to be singing with a string orchestra. I think it's a stroke of genius on this one. He's not one of the greatest singers in the world, but for this he's perfect. It's a simple honesty. He's not pretending to be a trained singer, but he doesn't send himself up by singing like a duffer. This is the best he can do. It's almost like someone singing hymns at school — rather than taking the piss out of it, you do the best you can.

**Were you a Beatles fan?**

It's not something I particularly listen to now, but in 1969 I listened to a lot of Beatles, because in GB I was living in London. I remember I was very fond of "Lady Madonna" which came out over there. I did get a lot of The Beatles' albums: *Magical Mystery Tour*, *Abbey Road*, *Sergeant Pepper*, *The White Album*. Just love the invention. And I suppose a lot of that was down to the skill of George Martin and the whole team of arrangers and the people putting the package together, as much as The Beatles themselves.

My one encounter, not with The Beatles but with John Lennon and Yoko Ono, was at a benefit concert which was given in a gallery in Piccadilly in the autumn of 68. It was in support of a lot of art students who were under pressure — Horsey and Guildford and all that kind of thing. John Tibbany and I did this live electronics thing together, and immediately afterwards was John Lennon and Yoko Ono. And he used my mic. So I passed the microphone to John Lennon and he said "Thanks, Wack!" Very sweet. That's my only personal connection with The Beatles.

**If this information gets out, there will be people coming round here knocking on the door.**

[Laughs] Can I touch the hand that touched the microphone that was passed to John Lennon?

## JOHN ZORN

**"Spillane" from Spillane (Elektra Nonesuch)**

[After listening intently for over five minutes] I'm slightly baffled by this one, I must admit. It struck me it could be one of about five different people, and all of them probably wrong. The ones I came up with were Sun Ra, Frank Zappa, Bill Frisell, Van Dyke Parks, that's about it. It's that kind of heterogeneous mix of things which gratuitously clicks into another style. The spoken voice sounded very much like the way that Frisell used spoken voice on the Deney album. It's that editing from one style to another that you find in all those people, but it's probably none of them.

**Frisell plays on it. It's by John Zorn.**

Well, I thought about John Zorn but thought it was too long for John Zorn. The Zorn I know is like snapshots. Well of course it is snapshots, but they're all strung together. Up to the point where I started taking I was quite interested in it. Then I thought this is going to go on for quite a while and it's probably lost it's way a little bit.

**What do you think of Zorn's jump-cut editing style?**

I think it's fine, I enjoy it. It's not something I would do myself. In fact Zorn works better on record than live. I remember seeing him play with Bill and also with Fred Frith and Joey Baron and the set was really rather frustrating because they'd play a 40 second number, stop, then look around for the parts for the next thing and wonder what they would play next. They had about two minutes between each piece and then a 30 second thrash, and it was just rather chaotic. But on record it works fine, also because he can do that editing in the studio rather than having to do it in real time, live.

Zorn interests me as a character. I don't necessarily like a lot of what he does, but like it is the wrong term anyway — I admire what he does. [But] Bill's a really interesting player, a very eclectic musician and aware of so many different things. I love his bongo playing for example, it's fantastic.

He's a really interesting recent phenomenon. Someone coming into the realms of jazz ten years before Bill would almost certainly be playing in that Jim Hall/Barnes Kessel sort of way, but Bill took on the rock side which none of the jazz players were interested in. He widened the whole range.

## PHILIP GLASS

**"Bed" from Einstein On The Beach (Sony Masterworks)**

It sounds like something of Philip Glass, but I don't recognise it.

**It's a part of Einstein On The Beach.**

It was the progression which reminded me of *Einstein*, but I didn't recognise this section. I've probably never heard *Einstein* all the way through. Some parts of *Einstein* I think are really stunning. I think it is essentially a (Robert) Wilson theatre piece, his work rather than Philip's. Obviously Philip's music is what people know now, but it comes about through Bob Wilson's ideas. Philip supported them with the music, and it's now been listed as one of Philip's major operas when in fact it was a collaborative piece.

There are several text things in there that I think are really stunning, very funny, and really interesting writing. I never saw it live and I've only heard extracts of the music. When Philip played extracts in concert it was never that one, more the high octave, fast, exciting things. And the things that I like from the recording, which I tend to zap to, are the choral ones, the ensemble plus choral voices and spoken voice. **Minimalism seems to be broadening out as a catch-all category for anything that isn't over-ornate. And anything that uses repetition, as your work can do, gets put in with it too. Isn't it a redundant categorisation now?**

It's become useful for selling a concert or selling an album. But for me, minimalism was a term that Michael Nyman was one of the first people to start using in terms of music, because it was a term in fine art before that. It basically meant a kind of music which was either repetitive or single-image music, where you had a very limited amount of materials which you permuted in different ways.

Jim Tenney, a composer who lives in Canada, thought that the only true minimalism was LaMonte Young's undifferentiated drones. He tends to refer to what most people call minimalism as "pulse-pattern music," which is quite an accurate description. Not quite good enough for journalism, pulse-pattern — awkward to say as well. But minimalism was really a historical period from 66-76 and after that, those composers — Steve Reich, Philip Glass, LaMonte Young, Terry Riley — all started to do different things. With

*Eisenstein On The Beach*, Philip started to work with theatre. Steve Reich started to think about orchestration and harmonies and things like that, which take you in another dimension from minimalism. Terry Riley started to work with string quartets.

Minimalism really became something you could use as a technique, one of the resources you could use in a piece, whereas previously it was a really hard-nosed aesthetic. So it actually has disappeared completely as a form of music, unless people are doing the old-time minimalist stuff. What Philip writes now I'd hardly call minimalist.

**Michael Nyman has gone on record as saying that he is sick and tired of being labelled a minimalist.**

Well, if people called me minimalist, I'd react in the same way as if someone called me a thick Yorkshire git — it's reasonably accurate but not completely true.

## BEARDED SEALS

**Environmental recording from *Ocean Of Sound* compilation (Virgin)**

I don't know what it is, but it sounds like one of those old rudimentary electronic kind of things. It sounds rather dated, from a particular era. It sounds like it's from the 60s.

**It's actually an underwater recording of bearded seals.**

Oh, right! I thought about whales, it had that sort of quality. The whales I'd know, but the seals I didn't recognise. It sounded to me like people playing with early electronic music but really not being composers. In fact they're not composers, which is quite reassuring. It's very sweet actually, it's nice. Do you know the lyrics?

**It's from a compilation album put together by David Toop as a companion to his book *Ocean Of Sound*.**

Well that figures. I remember years ago, 74, when I was in San Diego, people in between the physics and music departments were trying to set up doing live improvisation with dolphins. They'd analyse the sound of dolphins and then synthesise it and play it back and play with them. They'd put speakers in the ocean and play with the dolphins. The dolphins would sing with them and they'd do improvisations.

When I was in Los Angeles last week, there was a piece in the paper saying that they'd actually had to stop some sonic experiments in one of the bays

north of Los Angeles because three large humpbacked whales were found dead in the bay. They were wondering if it had anything to do with the sound experiments, long-distance sound projection at very high decibels under the ocean. It could well have killed them.

**Sound can be dangerous.**

Especially underwater as it's actually much more efficient under there — travels four times the distance.

That was very interesting. That's the sort of thing I can imagine David doing — that's his territory. He's a very eclectic guy and he is interested in all types of things: ethnic music. He went up the Amazon and all kinds of stuff. It is true that you did some underwater recordings for *Sinking Of The Titanic*?

They weren't recorded underwater. What we did was to simulate it by working in a physics laboratory, simulating the kind of sounds which might have happened if the string players were playing underwater. But in fact they can't play underwater so we couldn't do that. The depth of water we needed, several miles in the North Atlantic, the speakers wouldn't have stood the pressure. So we had to calculate what would happen and then try and do it in terms of all sorts of things like equalisation, delays, all sorts of things like that.

We did the first live recording of *Sinking Of The Titanic* in a disused water tower that had a particularly interesting acoustic ambience. And then we did a performance just after that in a swimming bath in Brussels. We actually played on a raft on the water. I enjoy playing with the physical nature of the environment you're playing in and doing things which relate to that, the acoustic space you're working in.

## HOWARD SKEMPTON

**Extract from *Lento* (NMC)**

I actually don't know it. It could be Gorecki and could equally be Michael Nyman or Philip Glass. It's between all those things to me.

**It's by an English composer, a contemporary of yours.**

Is it Taverner? It's not me. It's not Howard Skempton is it? That's not *Lento*, though, is it? Gosh Howard is one of those composers, one of my contemporaries from that same era of experimental music from the late 60s, early 70s, who's probably stayed closer

to that territory than most. It's almost like a statement of faith, like a very simple way of permutating small amounts of material. It's a form of minimalism but not in the way that we understand repetitive music — it's actually working within a miniature framework and turning things round from different perspectives.

**Skempton was a member of The Scratch Orchestra, which had parallels with The Portsmouth Sinfonia: what was your intention by forming the Sinfonia?**

There was no intention behind it at all. It originally started out one sunny May day in Portsmouth. We started to have a kind of Opportunity Knocks concert in the quadrangle of the art college where I was teaching. All sorts of people put together different kinds of acts, people telling jokes, jugglers, and we had this idea to form a symphony orchestra. There were only 13 of us and most people couldn't play the instruments, but we had to play something that would be recognised, no matter how badly we played it. Occasionally, if someone joined the orchestra because they wanted a good laugh, we'd kick them out, because everyone was doing their best. It was the gap between what they were achieving and what they were trying to do which became funny.

Since their knowledge of music didn't come from having studied music history, but rather what they'd heard on television, adverts and so on, we had to choose things which would be known to all of us. And so we came up with the *William Tell Overture*, because that was the *Lone Ranger* theme.

We did this as a one off at first, but afterwards we did a tape of that piece and did one of those little floppy records which we mailed out to people all over the world who we particularly admired, like Mao Tse-Tung, [footballer] Rodney Marsh, Leonard Bernstein. Bernstein liked it, but we didn't get a reply back from Pierre Boulez.

In '73 we made our first record which Brian Eno produced — he played with us from time to time — and that was recorded in a school hall in Wimbledon. And then we did a second album which was a live album at the Albert Hall. There were some people who came thinking they were going to hear the real thing, but there were only three people who walked out from an audience of more than 2000. Then we did another album of rock classics

because the LSO had done an album of rock classics. This was the worst orchestra in the world, and we thought there shouldn't be a worse orchestra in the world than us, so we did an album of Beach Boys and Beatles medleys and things like that.

## BILL EVANS TRIO

**"Jade Visions" from *Sunday At The Village Vanguard* (Riverside)**

[Immediately.] It's "Jade Visions", Scott LaFaro. It's the Vanguard album. It's certainly the last thing they recorded, and may well be the last thing they played together, as [jazz player] LaFaro was killed about two weeks later.

It's interesting because it's LaFaro's own composition and it's in 9/8, but it's in an unusual 9/8 time and there's two versions of it. There's one which is on that label, and a second take was also recorded. In this version, LaFaro makes a mistake in his own piece and loses a beat and Evans corrects him. It's quite touching to find someone who's undoubtedly the greatest jazz bass player of all time making a mistake in his own composition. You suddenly think, "Thank God he is human".

This trio for me was what ultimately got me into music full time. I realised this was what I wanted to do initially, but then I moved away from it. This track and "My Foolish Heart", the ballads were what I loved most. A lot of bass players after LaFaro, in order to go further, concentrated on his high, fast work, without realising that the supremely accurate choice of the right note — very solid, very in tune, really nice full sound — is what the band needs.

Charlie Haden was telling me that Scott LaFaro's bass, which was damaged in the car-crash which killed LaFaro, had turned up somewhere in a bass repairer's shop in New Jersey not long ago. Charlie used to share a flat with Scott LaFaro for a time. It's quite nice working and getting to know people who have these connections. In fact a really tenuous connection is that John Adams told me — when I first started being friends and visiting John in California in the 70s — that his first wife's sister had been Scott LaFaro's girlfriend. Not bad is it? [Laughs] Maybe Scott LaFaro was killed on his way to visit John Adams's first wife's sister Coo, that's music history isn't it? □



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# state of the artisan

**Howie B's** work with Brian Eno, U2, Skylab, Mo' Wax and his own Pussyfoot label have established him as a mercurial presence in the 90s musical landscape. Simon Reynolds talks to Howie in New York about sonic vibrations, shopping for wax and the nature of madness

**H**owie B is in New York on a two day mission devoted solely to buying records. I hook up with him late at night, after all the used record stores have shut, in a crowded downtown cafe on St Mark's Place. He's already spent \$400, picked up so much vinyl he had to buy a bag just to carry it, yet he's planning to cram in several more hours of shopping tomorrow before his flight back to London. Howie describes it as "pre-production" for the sessions for U2's new album, even though he isn't actually the producer. He's been asked in as a "player", which in his case really means "programming and playing records" and generally working up a "vibe" with the official producer, Flood. Work starts a week from now.

Drinking coffee and smoking Marlboro Lights, and accompanied by Michael Benson, his longtime friend from Glasgow who's written the stories that will accompany the forthcoming solo LP *Music For Babies*, Howie is still buzzing from the day's research. "I was in all the different shops, flipping through the albums on headphones, dropping the needle and thinking, 'Fuck, that's a corker, I can take that and fuck it up.' I've picked up everything from mad, mad Techno to New York muscals to old Herbie Mann stuff to Latin music."

What will he do with the 80-plus hours of music he's already acquired? "I'll take anything, it can be as small as a triangle hit, and I'll spread it across a [sampling] keyboard and turn it into a tuned piano. Or I'll take a timbale recorded in 1932 on this Latin record and make it into a percussion pattern, or snatch some vocal and take it four octaves down until it's like a lion's roar."

**W**hat exactly does Howie B do for a living? Examine the small print on the manifold projects he's been involved in through the last seven years — Soul II

Soul's first two albums, Tricky's "Ponderosa" and "Abbaon Fat Tracks", "I Miss You" on Björk's *Post*, Skylab's 1994 #1 album, *Passengers' Original Soundtracks 1*, the recent collaboration with Brian Eno and U2, plus the heap of tracks he's released via the Mo' Wax label and his own Pussyfoot imprint — and you'll find Howie credited in different ways. Most of the time he's down as engineer, sometimes he's credited as programmer, too. Elsewhere he's promoted to co-producer, and now and then he gets to share the publishing credit as writer. At what point does engineering bleed into production? Where do you draw the line between producer and creator? These distinctions, admits Howie, are becoming increasingly arbitrary, and largely dependent on the generosity of his employers. As ever, money and ego are at stake.

**T**he nature of modern music — the popularisation, through Techno, Ambient, TripHop and Jungle, of music without lyrics or conventional song structure, the rise of the studio-as-instrument aesthetic pioneered by, among others, Eno and the early 70s dub producers and engineers — has smudged the borders between composition and technology, writing and recording, art and craft. In such a confused and contested soundworld, it's easy to see how a figure like Howie — with no musical training in the conventional sense and few "traditional" instrumental skills — can slip and slide between different levels in the music hierarchy, while basically doing the same thing: "creating a vibe", as he puts it.

With so much of today's crucial music, it's sound-in-itself! — the timbre and penetration of a bass tone, the sensual feel of a sample texture, the gar of a drum loop — that's the hook, the sales point, not the sequence of notes that constitutes the melody. Howie B's career is just further proof that we need to start thinking of the engineer as poet, as weaver of dreams. Another example: *Timeless*, where engineer





Rob Playford shares the publishing credit with Goldie on more than half the songs, and Jungle's faceless abstraction co-exists uneasily with the record industry's demand for marketable stars.

This struggle between stagefront and bedroom has been a latent subset of pop for decades. For instance, Jagger/Richards might be the writing credit on The Rolling Stones' "Satisfaction," but it's Charlie Watts's drum bridge that provides the song's killer hook, and the same goes for whoever came up with the heartstopping bass part on The Four Tops' "Reach Out (I'll Be There)" (probably James Jamerson). Howie offers Lou Reed's "Walk On The Wild Side" as another example. "The guy who did the boss on that, Herbie Flowers, for me that bassline is the bomb! But nobody knows he played that line. I didn't until Brian Eno told me about five months ago."

Howie's passage through the recording studio's own hierarchy has followed "an almost quaint path: he started out as a tea boy, graduated to tape operator, then assistant engineer and so on. For three years he worked in the film industry as an assistant to veteran soundtrack composer Stanley Myers, 'creating atmospheres to go with visuals'. Together they worked on Nic Roeg films such as *Traff*, *29* and *The Witches*. It's ironic that someone renowned for working in a field (Ambient/Trip-hop) that valorises the notion of the imaginary soundtrack actually started out making sounds for existent movies. Completing the circle in a weird sort of way is his involvement in the Passengers project, which conjured 'original soundtracks' for mostly fictitious films, and the fact that *Misc For Bobs* is going to be accompanied by an animated movie.

In the beginning, Howard Bernstein was a fusion freak. It's quite refreshing to meet a musician in his early thirties whose seminal, life-changing musical experience wasn't seeing The Sex Pistols live, but a different kind of 1976 gg all-things. Santana, supported by Earth, Wind And Fire, when Howie was only 13.

As a Jewish boy growing up amid the Protestant versus Catholic sectarianism of Glasgow, Howie was an isolated adolescent who divided his time and passion between 70s comic jazz fusion and reading: radical psychoanalysts and mystical thinkers such as RD Laing, Jung/Jeff, Ouspensky (He actually studied psychology in Manchester, but quit when he realised that the only thing in which he was qualifying was "taking drugs and partying").

Young Howie was into Stanley Clarke, Return To Forever, Herbie Hancock's *Manchild*, even that dubious Santana offshoot Journey. "Through Santana I got into Alice Coltrane, John McLaughlin and the whole Sri Chinmoy Zen philosophy side of it. Music became something I could grab things off, follow as a route."

Like fusion heads old and new, Howie tends to talk about what he does in terms of vices ("hazy vibes", "getting a good vice", "hibbing off each other"), of "learning curves" and "opening up" and "giving". It's perhaps no surprise that he eventually fell in with the hippy-dread scene in London, becoming friends with Jazze B and Neflee Hooper, and eventually supplying them with enough "dead-time" in the studio where he worked to enable them to record Soul II Soul's debut album.

In 1990 Howie and his engineering partner Debbie got a deal with bland as Nomad Soul. They released one single, then "spent quarters of a million without realising it — I wasn't sitting there with a calculator, yknow... on an album that meshed up Hip-hop, soul and jazz, and is still sitting on a shelf at Foyles & Broadway." The vocalist was Diane Charlemagne, later to sing on Goldie tracks such as "Super" and "Inner City Life". In fact, in 1991 Howie worked with Goldie himself, on music that never saw the light of day, back when the Metalhead was part of the Houseparty posse. A rock misadventure and hadn't yet flipped out to "Arkone rave."

After the crushing blow of Nomad Soul, Howie dated for a while, he collaborated with Tricky and the Japanese duo Major Force, among many others. The first time most of us heard his name was in connection with *My Way*, for whom he's released a handful of 12's as Howie B, like *Old School* (1993).

Most notable is the Major Force collaboration "Morton Automatic", a weacked-out, Sun Ra-meets-The Orb affair which took five hours to make. "We took it to [Ho] Wears James Lavelle and said: 'What do you think?' Five weeks later I was in a dub and I heard it thought, 'Fuck, what's going on?' James' released it without telling us!"

Howie started his own, Mr War-like label, Pusayfoot, putting out tracks by himself, sometimes using the alter-ego Daddy/Jonglegs, and by like-minded friends. But perhaps his best work prior to *Misc For Bobs* was with Skylab. A new label called L'Attitude invited him to jam with Flat DuoCASE. "That played me all this stuff, mad loops and crazy noises. There was no material as such, just sound, but it was like a licence for me to go mad. We went into his attic and started making music, me vibing off what he'd play me I got Tosh and Kudo from Major Force in on four or five tracks. I'm very proud of that record, it's a mad album no rules, full of peaks and troughs and emotions, and with no A&R telling us what to do."

"Ghost Dance", one of the best tracks to emerge from those freeheeling sessions, is highly reminiscent of the foggy art-funk rhythms and chromatic smears of (one more time) David Byrne and Brian Eno's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*. When it was released in 1991, that record was dismissed by many as an academic, bloodbored affair, an epigonal's appropriation/description of black American and African black-science. In retrospect, with its considerable influence on Public Enemy producer Hank Shocklee, Artcore Junglists and ethnodelic trance units like Loop Guru, *Bush Of Ghosts* can be seen to have been uncannily prophetic.

"That was a very important record to me," admits Howie. "I was living in Manchester when I first heard it, and I'd got stoned and sat in between the speakers, out of my head, and just sit and write to the rhythms. Freeform words. It opened so many little doors for me."

Which makes it especially cool for Howie that he's been accepted into the Eno/U2 fold. The association began in February 95, when he was called in to salvage Bono's cover of "Hallelujah" for a Leonard Cohen tribute album. Four months later, he was invited to participate in the Passengers project.

"It was the maddest, mad, mad time," says Howard, emphatically. "A mad exchange of ideas. They gave me all this space and I just went, boof! I opened up totally. It was like walking into a little dream, these great musicians, all these wicked 20 minute grooves for me to take and fuck up."

Eno and U2 didn't, however, tell him anything about the original soundtracks concept. "All they said was that their ideas were. It's a late night album, and it's blue, the colour blue." When I got the promo, that was the first time I realised it was about films.

Howie co-produced three tracks, including the very *Bush Of Ghosts*-like "One Minute Warning", and co-wrote another, "Elvis Ate America". This lurching, ultra-minimal slice of swamp funk, vaguely redolent of Alan Vega's post-Suicide solo LPs of robotic rockability, was written and

**"I'll take a timbale recorded in 1932 and make it into a percussion pattern, snatch some vocal and take it four octaves down until it's like a lion's roar"**



meed by Howe in a few hours, the night before the album's final deadline. Bone had handed him his dakt doggerel (sample lyrics: "This is a beccanburger and just kept getting bigger") a few days earlier.

How did he find Eno as a co-producer? "It's just a totally different ball game. It's like when you think a stone is a stone, and all of sudden it turns into a butterfly. That's how I'd describe Brian. To be quite honest, I was shitting it when I first met him."

That first meeting took place at the beginning of last year at Eno's studio in Kilburn, North London. An informal jam session ensued. "Just me and him," explains Howe. "Three hours, no preconceptions. I turned up with my record deck and an Echoplex." Interviewed in *The Wire* later the same year, Eno would cite Howe's use of this effects unit as typical of a new preference for lo-tech, antique, tack-specific equipment. "Howe B, if he wanted could have all sorts of digital processing boxes, but he wants that. He's focused on it and he's used it with such taste and skill."

And now, bearing the very Eno-esque title *Music For Babies*, here's Howe B's debut album: a concept record about "the joy of having my little girl Chilli, who's now a year and a half old." From the rich, corrugated riffs of "Allergy" (inspired by Chilli's milk allergy) to the idyllic tone-and-imbibe poem "Here Comes The Tooth", this is a virtuoso sampler of styles. But what does the person who inspired the record make of it? "I played it to her, and there's something going on there! She's moving to it. Sometimes she goes up and turns it off, then she turns it back on again."

It's a live Attack's Protection, with its accompanying Eurochild exhibition of your times, wasn't proof enough that TripHop is the new art rock. *Music For Babies* is a limited package combining text and design, and with an accompanying film in tow. Taken from Major Force, he's on the cutting edge of graphics," says Howe, "and he's known me since I was a kid. And an animator called Run Wake is doing a wee film to go with it."

Adding herbal tea straight from the pot to soothe his sore throat, Benson takes over. "When how his stories and prose poems became part of *Music For Babies*. 'I'd met this woman who was really fucked up on drugs and yet she'd written a whole novel. She explained that she'd done it by writing a page a day. I started doing the same thing, but every page was so different. I could never make them link up. The stuff that comes with the album is a sample from that work-in-progress. Some stories are inspired by the shape of particular tracks, so that the text will be cut up into different sections, or it will be a thin strip of words, like a thin strip of sound. Sometimes it worked the other way round. Howe would read a story and then start a track from that. But lots of them have fuck all to do with the music!"

"The novel and the fiction market are very much alive," he continues, "but at the same time people I know very rarely phone me up and say, 'I've got this wicked novel.' So far me, the idea is to stick fiction in places where you don't usually find it, the sort of places where I get excited. I love buying records, so that's where I want to put my work."

Despite his lack of conventional musical training, Howe B is very much what used to be called a "muse." And like your true muse, he hates categories and labels. "One of the particular irks in hip-hop, the phrase so often used to label his own approach to sound construction. Why does the term offend him so much?"

"I don't know where it came from," he grins. "I was involved in that whole vibe of the mid-90s where a lot of people from outside think they can put a phrase on it, explain it. But for me all that we're doing is making music. When you penetrate something, as soon as I go something outside those walls it becomes a problem for people."

"It's just groove-oriented music," he continues. "Hip-hop is France-like as much as Hip-hop is Techno are, you get locked onto the groove. Because there's no vocal in my music, I have to create a soundscape for people to travel through. Maybe I don't pick up the mic and express myself through words, but it's still my form of expression. I do see the tracks as songs, there's feelings and emotions, and it can be just as freeing in hip-hop, or as wicked as hip-hop. I see it as hip-hop, as music, as a collaboration of ideas. 'Madison Economics', that was like me doing a tune with Jimmy Smith, even though he wasn't there."

*Music For Babies* is released in February on Polydor. *Passengers*' Original Soundtracks 1 is out now on Island. *Skylob*'s #1 has just been released by Lattitude through PolyGram. The *Passport* compilation *Best Foot Forward* is available through RTT/DISC.

# 95 rewind

Was it a good year for the roses? *Wire* writers look back on some of the musical highlights of the last twelve months

## Event horizons

If few electronic musicians were ready to take up the live challenge of fusing sequencers with instruments, as seemed likely 12 months ago, there was a certain willingness on the part of concert promoters and festival organisers to give more creative input to live events, clubs and multimedia cruises. Some of the year's most memorable events played different musics off against one another (and other artforms), and tried to reflect some of Electronica's more exotic, multi-layered exploits with *Anders Rønne*-style spectacles. Perhaps the most grandiose of these were the Polar Festival in Norway, which culminated with Høyer Intelligence Agency and Biosphere performing at the top of a mountain lift above the Arctic Circle, and Glasgow's *Stormy Waters*, where Autechre, Plaid and the Satva drummer troupe accompanied cyberpoet Ronald Fraser Munro, flanked by donning harbour cranes and massive video projections on the old granaries of the city's docks. Two European post-rave music festivals, Barcelona's *Utopia* and Vienna's *Phonotaktik*, excelled by hosting challenging and entertaining musics in symbiosis with other arts and sciences, computer and communications technology, architecture, performance art, drama and installation.

Funding inadequacies continue to prevent events of such richness being initiated in the UK, so their equivalents remain the domain of private-commercial enterprises and underground club movements. Dösböy provided a succession of scoops including Martin Rev and Cynthia Pistori crastiny, while The Big Chill persuaded hundreds to join them for a blissful weekend in the Welsh Mountains, but could barely fill the balcony of The Forum for Herk's confused Eyeball show in November. The London Musicians' Collective enjoyed far greater visibility than usual, supplementing their annual festival with the Out There A Minute season at London's South Bank.

with appearances by Faust, AMM, David Toop and Max Eastley, Scanner, Osomo Yoshihide and Yamatsuka Eye, *Osomo Inferno* and others in the space of two months. Meanwhile, at year's end, the *Wire*-sponsored Live Aggressions laid down a stirring precedent for future live-performance arenas for club research. **BOB YOUNG**

## Refining tastes

Rather, also revelation or revolution, much of 1995 seemed to be about refinement, as musicians sought to consolidate and expand (and occasionally, capsize) some of the visionary breakthroughs that occurred across a broad spectrum of the culture in the preceding 12 months. Notably, this trend was most apparent in relatively new genres such as drum 'n' bass, TripHop and post-Ambient/Techno electronic music, all of which had gone supernova in 1994, but it was also detectable



in more established musical styles. *Wire* and *Anders Rønne* continued to work out their emerging relationships with music, with *Wire* once musically exclusive *Anders Rønne* shining example: Evan Parker (see *Wire*, *Wire* with *zowie* *Wire*).

One exception was Scott Walker's *Tilt*, which occupied a world of its own in more ways than one. The record's release in May was preceded by ecstatic rumours of its phenomenal production costs (up to \$400,000 said some). Whatever the final figure, the results for this listener (although probably not Walker's record company Fontana, who were saddled with that most unclimatic of commodities - an expensive, unsaleable record by a reclusive artist) would have been cheap at twice the price. The record's sublimation of operatic melodrama, orchestral kinetics, industrial noise and geopolitical intrigues to an ongoing and very personal agenda (as Walker's attempts to free himself from the chains of his past professional life) sounded baffling and inspirational in equal measure.

Tit was one obvious highlight. Tricky's *Moonquay* was another. In a way, Tricky's detuned new urban blues sounded as hermetically-sealed in its own private universe as the music on Walker's record, but it also represented a continuation (maybe the apex) of a wider impulse in 90s post-dance music, where nihilistic philosophies, existential angst and sexual psychosis were not so much components in a 24-7 alien existence (see Lee Perry, one obvious model for Tricky) as part of the marketing campaign (see also Björk).

Ironically, much brilliant music in 95 never made it into the withering light of wider public perception by dint of its elusive, shifting identity. Arthur Russell's vaporous (and posthumous) *Another Thought*; Martyn Bates and Mick Harris's album of Ambient folklore *Murder Ballads* (DnT); John Wall's digital symphonies on *Altavox*, most of the records released by John Zorn's Tzadik label, the list goes on. But if one musician in 95 embodied the oft-quoted notion of the mobile world musician it was Jim O'Rourke. His work with such outwardly incompatible artists as Oval, Faust, KIK Null (in Yona-Kit), European improvisers Günter Müller and Mats Gustafsson, among others, seemed to be undertaken in a spirit of ecumenical enquiry and selfless industry. The man's a star. Or rather, he should be.

TONY HERRINGTON

## On the down beats

1995 started with such exorbitant anticipation, but ends, for this listener, in slight disappointment. Ideas that last year seemed explosive with potential, appear to have already played themselves out. TripHop, for instance, promised the ultimate in fucked up, anything-goes, neo-B-boy abstraction, yet too often delivered a half-assed sequencing of borrowed bits and bobs, and a mood spectrum ranging from cheesy affability to pale blue.

Jungle has not evolved dramatically since late 94. At the genre's ruff end, ragga-dubstep voices and reversed basslines are still being caned to death, 18 months after Dead Dreds' "Dred Bies", while the 'Intelligent' sector has just got sicker. The scene is split between those who reckon 'progression' involves making drum 'n' bass sound more like other genres (House, Garage, Detroit Techno), and purists who want Jungle to advance by sounding ever more intensely like itself.

The fusion approach, exemplified by the cabal of Wax Doctor/Protek/Alax Reece, produced one undisputed killer track in Reece's "Pulp Fiction", but otherwise seemed more like the birth of a new, less interesting, genre than a future for Jungle. The drum 'n' bass essentialists, meanwhile, are pursuing a more paradoxical 'always the same, always different' course, which paid off in only a precious few instances — MA2's "Hearing Is Believing", Knut's "Set Speed", Soe & Die's "11.55", Asend's "Take My Soul", Dropin' Science's "Step Off", Tek 9's "We Bring Anybody Down", tracks by Aphrodite and DJ Hyde — all of which combined minimalism and complexity in thrilling ways. Caught between Intelligent Jungle's serenity and the

ruff stuff's gangsta paranoia, the idea of drum 'n' bass as fun, as Ed up semi-MENTAL chaos, as pop even, has fallen away.

Perhaps the most proactive effects of TripHop and Jungle in 95 came through their impact on artists from other genres. Techno outliers (Luke Vibert, Aphex Twin) and post-rockers (Boyerang, Techno Animal, Tortoise). Because they don't have to placate DJs or dancers, because they don't belong, these artists are free to exacerbate TripHop's sampledriven atmospheres and Jungle's rhythmic convulsions. Other responses will surely follow, not knowing what form they'll take will hopefully make 1996 full of surprises.

SIFON REYNOLDS

## Rock of ages

In 95 the sub-genres coined to make sense of rock's more adventurous practitioners became blurred. Maybe they always were, but any Darwinian view of succession became harder to justify. Post-rock, for instance, co-exists with rock, and though the semantic implication is that its forbear is redundant, the former still lives in the latter's corporate shadow. That's another issue.

Chicago's Tortoise produced music that was simultaneously low key and electrifying, transfiguring the hands-on, real-time group interaction of rock via the virtual chambers of the studio. If Tortoise and their contemporaries (the most notable being Man, Labradford, Jesamine) are rock as deconstruction, effectively manipulating the space that's left, Caspar Brötzmann Massaker represent rock as construction, forging something from the noise and detritus that presaged them. Massaker's *Home* was the apogee of a way of thinking that links musicians as disparate as Hendrix and The Heat.

Progressive rock had a rebirth of sorts (it never really went away) thanks to the Cuneiform label releasing complex major works by established groups: U Toter's *Strange Attractors*, Doctor Nerve's *Sun* (already a classic), plus the debut from The Sarnese Stepbrothers. Other examples of neo-Prog came from inimitable Colorado veterans Biota (Object Holder) and Arto Lindsay, back on sploist form with an improv-tinged trio on *Aggregates 7-26*, while in Europe, Italy's LA1919 (with Chris Cutler and Charles Hayward) and France's *Souzette Etages* and *Etage 34* all dealt in visceral free rock which combined virtuosic musicianship, imaginatively structured (song) arrangements, and an openness to other genres.

In Japan, Tokyo's thriving PSF label produced at least two classics in the shape of High Rise's *High Rise Live*, a record which finally unlocks the considerable power of the extraordinary group, and the self-titled debut from Musica Transonic, on which members of High Rise, Toho Sano and The Ruins bonded together to produce a series of New Age/Heavy Metal/acid rock sound-mandalas that came on like Blue Cheer at the peak of their powers. All of note were White Heaven, who brought their 60s West Coast guitar groove to London during the latter half of the summer. Koji Hano's



Tricky

FushTusha also came to London. The chance to discover if guitarist Hans's legendary trio were really as good live as they were on record was irresistible, and (as the forthcoming double CD will prove) they proved to be superlatively magnificent in every respect. We look forward to hearing Key's new CD where he performs a series of compositions for an arsenal of hurdy-gurdies.

MIKE BARNES/CHRIS BLACKFORD/EDWIN POONCEY

## Tonal dialing

In classical music it wasn't all minimalism in 1995, but the genre's American and East European exponents were still dominating concert halls and CD racks. Georgian composer Giya Kancheli — "the new Gorecki" — performed *Life Without Christmas* on London's South Bank, while his *Ed and Aba* and *Valdemar* were highlights of ECM's New Series. Arvo Part was present for a moving performance of his own *Passeo* by The Hilliard Ensemble at Brompton Oratory. Galina Ustvolskaya's shocking brand of solo-minimalism is suddenly no hearing Key's new CD where he performs a series of compositions for an arsenal of hurdy-gurdies.

With the resurgence of former Communists across Eastern Europe, 'Holy Minimalists' must be feeling under siege — compounded by the odd piece of sniping by old serial avant gardists. In an interview with a classical music magazine, Pierre Boulez sniffed, "I gather that Gorecki has been able to buy a Mercedes from his royalties [from the *Third Symphony*]. So at least he now has a big car." Just like his old rival, Penderecki. Meanwhile, secular minimalist Philip Glass long ago gave up his tax, and released new recordings in abundance, notably his Fifth String Quartet played by Kronos (Nonesuch). Michael Nyman continued to motor his way into the hearts of the nation with music for the film *Coramion*.

Boulez celebrated his 70th birthday at London's



Barbican. That other eagle of modernism, Karlheinz Stockhausen, took Ambient Technocrats' to task on Radio 3 and in the pages of *The Wire* for not listening to his works. But post-war serialism no longer looks anything like the modernist mainstream. Even so, The Arditi Quartet continued to advocate it brilliantly, from Stockhausen student York Holler's *Antiphon* to a superb account of Schoenberg's own *String Quartets*.

The best place to look for an alternative to minimalism and serialism — call it neo-tonality? — is the excellent NMC label. Highlights were *On All Fours* by Mark-Anthony Turnage, and works by Irish composer Gerald Barry. Neo-tonality was also represented by James Macmillan's *Seven Last Words* (Catalyst).

The Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival is an event which, we learned, even Tony Heritage Secretaries know about. As an antidote to minimalism, they featured the maximalism of James Dillon. His 45th year was one of his most eventful, with two CDs released on Auvidis Montagne, including the orchestral pieces *Ignis Myster* and *Helle Nacht*. The much anticipated premiere recording of 92 year old Berthold Goldschmidt's finely-wrought *Beatrice Cenci* was, for me, rather a disappointment. But the Goldschmidt revival, and the popularity of neo-tonalists, is another illustration that maybe serialism was an aberration, that in the 20th century art music is turning full circle. **ANDY HAMILTON**

## From jazz to the roots

The year in jazz began and ended well, bookended by excellent London performances from The Paul Motian Trio and The Art Ensemble Of Chicago. Motian, Joe Lovano and Bill Fisel first recorded together over ten years ago. They hit on a distinct sound and continue to refine it. It just gets better and better. The Art Ensemble celebrated 30 years together with a striking performance in November that included some magnificent improvising from Roscoe Mitchell. Also memorable were Prime Time: the group followed up their multi-directional *Tone Doping* CD with a London

performance that featured Ornette Coleman in motley, video screens, a mostly inaudible rapper and peculiar dancers (but, unlike one of the group's shows in San Francisco at the beginning of the year, no modern-primitive scarification rituals).

London, being full of prophets unrecognized in their own city, remained good for seeing exceptional improved music in small venues. Of the larger events, three duo performances (all under the aegis of the LMC) were particularly potent: Derek Bailey with Peter Brötzmann, Zeena Parkins with Chris Cutler, and Barry Guy with Mats Gustafsson. Nearly all of the year's most enlivening releases in the jazz and improvised fields came from tiny independent labels, both well-established and newly-instituted: Leo, FMP, Incus, Georg Graewer's Random Acoustics imprint and, in Chicago, Okka Disk.

In another universe entirely, it was another great year for 70s reggae. Its afterlife wasn't the preserve of the digital groups alone — witness the vocal samples popping up among the endless polyfusions of drum 'n' bass. But mid-70s dub seemed as pertinent as any thing else going on this year. The serious attention being paid to the period by labels like Pressure Sounds and Blood And Fire has brought real obscurities into the Our Prices of the land: the former's Santic sampler and the latter's Tappa Zukie set stood out in particular.

**WILL MONTGOMERY**

## Wired for sound

Multimedia installations, screensavers, enhanced CDs, CD-ROMs, the Internet: all of these arenas for digital expression became more prominent in 95. 1996 will no doubt see further development and cross-fertilisation. Towering Inferno's *Kaddish*, a multimedia performance that toured Europe, combined grainy film footage of sometimes suspect provenance with a live music soundtrack ranging from Hungarian folk song to industrial noise. Its subject was the Holocaust, and it reportedly left Brian Eno terrified (although at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire in November, the impact of the piece was derided by an unsympathetic venue and

failing technology). Less ambitious but more successful, Eno's own installation in collaboration with Laurie Anderson and students of the RCA, *Self Storage*, gestured at interactive narrative and utilised sound, text and smell to lead its audience around a huge storage hangar in North London. Anderson herself developed her style and taste for multimedia by releasing *The Puppet Motel*. This CD-ROM was an unusual and rare experience, innovative in its design and with some new features, such as a gateway to the Internet where you could enhance the CD by downloading more information from the Voyager website. The site also contained interactive drawings and diagrams relating to her often dazzling, occasionally overblown *Nerve Bible* tour, which reached London in June. Anderson's work demonstrates a real understanding of how these media of performance publishing and Internet delivery can be woven together. More than can be said for *The Rolling Stones*, whose *Voodoo Lounge* CD-ROM is the worst yet (and probably the most expensive). Bob Dylan did better with *Highway 61* interactive, but the best CD-ROM of 95 was *Zion Train's Homegrown Fantasy*. This combined the standard interactive elements (mixing desks, group info, video clips) with originality and style. The CD also launched you, via ZT's Interactive Bush Telegraph, onto the Net.

Further evidence of the Net's use as a transmitter of music arrived midway through the year in the form of RealAudio. This allows sound to reach an Internet user instantaneously, without having to download sound files. At the moment the reproduction is quite poor, but it promises FM-quality sound before too long. Meanwhile, independent Websites such as *State51* (<http://www.state51.co.uk/state51/>), *Obscure* (<http://www.southern.com/obscure/>) and *Mingo* (<http://www.in-berlin.de/mingo/>) all helped make the relationship between music and the Net more dynamic than ever before in 95. Enhanced CDs also began to appear, with and without screensavers: most notable were those by The Durutti Column, Emergency Broadcast Network and The Residents. Expect a good number of albums in 1996 to have some sort of software burned into them. **MARK ESPINER**





# blessed releases

Listed over the next five pages, you'll find the **Best Records of 1995** as voted for by *The Wire*'s dream team of critics and commentators. Following a chart containing the Top 50 albums of the year across all categories, we list the best records in each of six different genres, mostly self-explanatory, plus the pick of the year's compilations and reissues. And just in case we missed anything, the Transgressions chart caters for all the music released in 95 that refused to be categorised, even by us.

## records of the year

**Maxinquaye** — Tricky (Island)

**Black Secret Technology**

— A Guy Called Gerald (Juice Box)

**Tilt** — Scott Walker (Fontana)

**Tone Dialing** — Ornette Coleman & Prime Time (Harmolodic)

**94 Diskont** — Oval (Mille Plateaux)

**Re-Entry** — Techno Animal (Virgin)

**Only Built 4 Cuban Linx** — Raekwon (Loud/RCA)

**Timeless** — Goldie (Metalheadz/ffrr)

**To Bring You My Love** — PJ Harvey (Island)

**laora Tahiti** — Mouse On Mars (Too Pure)

**Deepest Cut Vol 1** — Omni Trio (Moving Shadow)

**Brown Sugar** — D'Angelo (Cooltempo)

**Tri Repetae** — Autechre (Warp)

**Alterstill** — John Wall (Utterpsalm)

**Vakio** — Panasonic (Blast First)

**Abii Ne Viderem** — Giya Kancheli (ECM)

**Post** — Björk (One Little Indian)

**Apart** — Paul Schütze (Virgin)

**Another Thought** — Arthur Russell (Point)

**Screen Ceremonies** — David Toop (The Wire Editions)



ONLY  
BUILT  
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Techno Animal  
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The New CD

# Tilt at windmills

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## Scott Walker — *Tilt*

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## records of the year (continued)

**Musica Transonic** — Musica Transonic (PSF)  
**Rhythms, Resolutions & Clusters** — Tortoise (City Slang)  
**Stellar Regions** — John Coltrane (Impulse!)  
**Time Will Tell** — Paul Bley/Evan Parker/Barre Phillips (ECM)  
**Salsoro** — Derek & The Ruins (Tzadik)  
**Diaspora** — Natacha Atlas (Nation)  
**No Protection** — Massive Attack Versus Mad Professor (Virgin)  
**Cryptology** — David S Ware (Homestead)  
**Zipless** — Vanessa Daou (MCA)  
**N'Der Fouta Touro Vols 1 & 2** — Mansour Seck (Sterns)  
**50th Anniversary Concert** — Evan Parker (Leo)  
**Grayfolded 2: Mirror Ashes** — John Oswald (Swell/Artefact)  
**Throbbing Pouch** — Wagon Christ (Rising High)  
**The Ugly One With The Jewels** — Laurie Anderson (WEA)  
**Djelika** — Toumani Diabate (Hannibal/Advance)  
**2 Bows** — Frances-Marie Uitti (BivHaast)  
**Bloomsbury Theatre 12.3.95** — Tindersticks (This Way Up)  
**La Legende D'Eer** — Iannis Xenakis (Montaigne)  
**Ulysses's Gaze** — Eleni Karandrou (ECM)  
**Money Mark's Keyboard Repair Shop** — Money Mark (Mo' Wax)  
**Songs Of The Cold Seas** — Hector Zazou (Columbia)  
**On All Fours** — Mark-Anthony Turnage (NMC)  
**There Are Strings** — Spring Heel Jack (Rough Trade)  
**Sargasso Sea** — Pram (Too Pure)  
**Music For The Amorphous Body Study Centre** — Stereolab (Duophonic)  
**Urban Ritual** — Nishuks Bonga's Tshisai (SLAM!)  
**In Pine Effect** —  $\mu$ -Ziq (Planet  $\mu$ )  
**Musica Callada** — Federico Mompou (ECM)  
**You Love Chinese Food** — Pablo's Eye (Extreme)  
**Clouds Taste Metallic** — Flaming Lips (WEA)

## electronica

**Tri Repetae** — Autechre (Warp)  
**laora Tahiti** — Mouse On Mars (Too Pure)  
**94 Diskont** — Oval (Mille Plateaux)  
**Re-Entry** — Techno Animal (Virgin)  
**Screen Ceremonies** — David Toop (The Wire Editions)  
**Apart** — Paul Schutze (Virgin)

**Makesrocket** — Jake Sazenger (Clear)  
**In Pine Effect** —  $\mu$ -Ziq (Planet  $\mu$ )  
**Spore** — Scanner (New Electronica)  
**Init Ding** — Microstona (Mille Plateaux)  
**Music For Particles** — Bedouin Ascent (Rising High)  
**Node** — Node (Deviant)  
**I Care Because You Do** — Aphex Twin (Warp)  
**Electronic Desert** — Global Electronic Network (Mille Plateaux)  
**Reasons To Sway** — Sketch (Apollo/R&S)  
**Celestial Soul** — As One (New Electronica)  
**Emt 3395** — International People's Gang (Emt/Time Recordings)  
**Mulsance** — SI-(cut)db (Suburbs Of Hell)  
**Hollow Earth** — Soma (Extreme)  
**Green Machine** — Ben Neill (Astralwerks)

## out rock

**Rhythms, Resolutions & Clusters** — Tortoise (City Slang)  
**Sargasso Sea** — Pram (Too Pure)  
**Tilt** — Scott Walker (Fontana)  
**Musica Transonic** — Musica Transonic (PSF)  
**Home** — Caspar Brötzmann Massaker (Blast First)  
**A Stable Reference** — Labradford (Flying Nun)  
**Aggregates 1-26** — Arto Lindsay Trio (Knitting Factory)  
**The Caution Appears** — Fushitsusha (Les Disques Du Soleil)  
**Gamara/Cliff Dweller Society** — Tortoise (Duophonic 7")  
**Hx** — Main (Beggars Banquet)  
**Skin** — Dr Nerve (Cuneiform)  
**Grayfolded 2: Mirror Ashes** — John Oswald (Swell/Artefact)  
**Null And Void** — Ground Zero (Tzadik)  
**Further** — Flying Saucer Attack (Domino)  
**Intoxicated Man** — Mick Harvey (Mute)  
**Live/Dead** — Ascension (Shock)  
**When In Vanitas...** — bnse glace (Skin Graft)  
**Jessamine** — Jessamine (Kranky)  
**In The Space Of A Few Minutes** — Telstar Ponies (Fire)  
**Ray Gun Sultane** — Pere Ubu (Cooking Vinyl)

## jazz & improvisation

**Tone Dialing** — Ornette Coleman & Prime Time (Harmolodic)  
**Cryptology** — David S Ware (Homestead)



**Open Paper Tree** — Michel Doneda/Paul Rogers/  
Le Quin Nih (FMP)

**Time Will Tell** — Paul Bley/Evan Parker/Barre Phillips (ECM)

**Love Is Touching** — John Tchicai & The Archetypes (B&W)

**Urban Ritual** — Ntsheko Bonga's Tshisa (SLAM)

**Illuminate** — Joe Morris/Rob Brown Quartet (Leo)

**Drop Me Off At 96th** — Derek Bailey (Scatter)

**One Night in Glasgow** — Lol Coxhill/Pat Thomas (Scatter)

**Veil Of Tears** — Organum (Matchless)

**Concert Moves** — John Butcher/Phil Durrant/John Russell (Random  
Acoustics)

**50th Anniversary Concert** — Evan Parker (Leo)

**Oblivities** — Evan Parker/Barry Guy (Maya)

**Band On The Wall** — Eddie Prévost/Marilyn Crispell (Matchless)

**Def Trance Beat** — Steve Coleman & Five Elements (RCA)

**Start Moving Earbuds** — Mick Beck's Something Else  
(Bruce's Fingers)

**The Art Of Memory** — John Zorn/Fred Frith (Incus)

**Stellar Regions** — John Coltrane (Impulse!)

**Carry The Day** — Henry Threadgill's Very Very Circus (Sony)

**Slow Motion** — Gunter Müller/Jim O'Rourke (For 4 Ears)

## club trax

**Pulp Fiction** — Alex Reece (Metalheadz 12")

**Black Secret Technology** — A Guy Called Gerald (Juice Box)

**The Beast Remixes** — Palmtrunk Productions (Mo' Wax 12")

**Only Built 4 Cuban Linx** — Raekwon (LoudRCA)

**Plug #1** — Plug (Rising High 12")

**Claire** — lo (Mo' Wax Excursions 12")

**Red Planet #6** — Red Planet (Underground Resistance 12")

**The Angels Fell** — Dillinja (Metalheadz 12")

**Maxinquaye** — Tricky (Island)

**Timeless** — Goldie (Metalheadz/FFRR)

**Dub Selection Vol 1** — More Rockers (More Rockers)

**Vol 5: Step Off** — Droppin' Science (Droppin' Science 12")

**The Whole World** — Endemic Voad (Language 12")

**Water Margin** — Photek (Photek 12")

**Take Your Soul** — Asend (Second Movement 12")

**Horizons** — LTJ Bukem (Good Looking 12")

**What Does Your Soul Look Like?** — DJ Shadow (Mo' Wax 12")

**Herb 'N' Decay EP** — Dub Culture (Pterodactyl 12")

**Smoker's Delight** — Nightmares On Wax (Warp)

**Theme From Boymerang** — Boymerang (Leaf 12")

## contemporary composition

**Abil Ne Viderem** — Gaja Kanchel (ECM)

**Compositions I-III** — Galina Ustvolskaya (Philips)

**Works #1** — Iancu Dumitrescu (Editions Modern)

**La Belle Et La Bête** — Philip Glass (Elektra Nonesuch)

**Seven Last Words From The Cross** — James MacMillan (Catalyst)

**Dancers On A Plane** — Kevin Volans (Collins Classics)

**Musica Callada** — Fedenco Mompo (ECM)

**Ulysses's Gaze** — Eleni Karandrou (ECM)

**On All Fours** — Mark-Anthony Turnage (NMC)

**La Légende D'Eer** — Iannis Xenakis (Montaigne)

**Musik For Wind Instruments And Percussion**

— Giacinto Scelsi (Attacca Babel)

**Solos And Ensembles** — John Lambert (NMC)

**Helmut Lachenmann Vols 1 & 2**

— Helmut Lachenmann (Montaigne)

**Gala** — Krzysztof Penderecki (Sony Classics)

**The Night Chant** — Mamoru Fujieda (Tzadik)

## international

**Diaspora** — Natacha Atlas (Nation)

**N'Der Fouta Tooro Vols 1 & 2** — Mansour Seck (Stems)

**Joujouka Black Eyes** — Master Musicians Of Joujouka (Sub Rosa)

**Djelika** — Toumani Diabate (Hannibal/Advance)

**The Harp Of King David** — Alemu Aga (Long Distance)

**Balinese: Gamelan Gong** (Interra)

**Ngobila** — Somo Somo (Stems)

**Suerte** — Abed Azné & Pedro Alredo (Harmonia Mundi)

**Live In Addis Ababa 1994** — Mohammed Wardi  
(Rags Productions)

**Burn Baby Burn** — The Otherside featuring Musa K  
(Jungle Rendez-Vous)

**Sumatra: Musiques Des Batak** (Inedit)

**Dream** — U. Srinivas/Michael Brook (Real World)

**Lamentation** — Tunde Jegede (Trincom)

**Sundanese: Degung-Sabilulungan** (Interra)

**The Desert Speaks** — Yosefa (Hemisphere)



## transgressions

**Screen Ceremonies** — David Toop (The Wire Editions)

**Alterstill** — John Wall (Uttersalsim)

**Spinner** — Wobble/Eno (All Saints)

**You Love Chinese Food** — Pablo's Eye (Extreme)

**Possible Worlds** — Markus Stockhausen (CMP)

**Object Holder** — Biota (ReR)

**The Kirghiz Light** — Rapoon (Staalplaat)

**2 Bows** — Frances-Marie Uitti (BvHaast)

**The Witch Hunter** — Shingoku Thref (Dorobo)

**Salsoro** — Derek & The Ruins (Tzadik)

**Primal Image** — Alan Lamb (Dorobo)

**Tonami** — Jorge Reyes (No CD)

**Murder Ballads (Drift)** — Martyn Bates/MJ Harris

(Musica Maxima Magnifica)

**Underground Overlays From The Cistern Chapel**

— Stuart Dempster (New Albion)

**Paralyzed Mind Of The Archangel Vold**

— Harmony Rockets (Big Cat)

**Entomic** — Invisible String Quartet (SLAM)

**Donkey Rhubarb** — Aphex Twin/Philip Glass (Warp 12")

**Painted Desert** — Ikue Mori/Robert Quine/Marc Ribot (Avant)

**Polwechsel** — Polwechsel (Random Acoustics)

## compilations

**Macro Dub Infection** (Virgin)

**Collaborations** (Lo Recordings)

**Miscellaneous** (Language)

**Universal Sounds Of America** (Soul Jazz)

**Soul Of Black Peru** (Luaka Bop)

**Jungle Heat 95** (Virgin)

**Step To Another World Music** (Rec Rec)

**Wildflowers: New York Loft Jazz Sessions Vols 1-3**

(Douglas Music)

**Sif Saafa: New Music From The Middle East** (Hemisphere)

**Emt 5595** (Time Recordings)

**History Of Hardcore** (Moving Shadow/Suburban Base)

**Routes From The Jungle: Escape Velocity Vol 1** (Virgin)

**Deconstruct** (Blast First)

**Best Foot Forward** (Pussyfoot)

**Transparent Messenger** (Symposium Hermit)

**Disco Bhangra: Wedding Bands From Rajasthan (DW)**

**Freezone 2** (SSR/Crammed)

**Wavelength Infinity: A Sun Ra Tribute** (Rastascan)

**Swarm Of Drones** (Sombient)

**Unknown Public 5: Voicebox** (Unknown Public)

## reissues

**Mwandishi: Complete Warner Bros Recordings**

— Herbie Hancock (Warner Archives)

**Brian Jones Presents The Pipes Of Pan At Joujouka**

— Master Musicians Of Joujouka (Point)

**Voice Of The Xtabay** — Yma Sumac (Rev-Ola)

**Complete Live At The Plugged Nickel**

— Miles Davis Quintet (Sony)

**Historic Moments Vol 2** — Creation Rebel (On-U Sound)

**Canaxis** — Hojjer Czukai/Rolf Dammers (Spoon)

**Call Of The Valley** — Sharma/Kabra/Chaurasia (Hemisphere)

**Peel Slowly And See** — The Velvet Underground (Polydor)

**Miniatures** — Various (Voiceprint)

**Classics** — Aphex Twin (R&S)

**The Thrill Of It All** — Roxy Music (Virgin)

**Complete Africa/Brass Sessions** — John Coltrane (Impulse!)

**Anthology: Return Of The Repressed** — John Fahey (Rhino)

**Live In Tokyo** — Weather Report (Sony Japan)

**Saxophone Solos** — Evan Parker (Chronoscope)

**King Tubby's Prophecy Of Dub** — Yabby U (Blood & Fire)

**Music By Ry Cooder** — Ry Cooder (WEA)

**Weasels Ripped My Flesh**


— The Mothers Of Invention (Rykodisc)

**Java: Royal Palace Of Yogyakarta Vols 1-4** (Ocora)

**Mantra** — Karlheinz Stockhausen (Wergo)

*The above charts were compiled from the individual votes of:*

Sylvestre Balazard, Jake Barnes, Mike Barnes, Olive Bell, Chris Blackford, Linton Chiswick, Richard Cook, Phil England, Kodwo Eshun, Louise Gray, Andy Hamilton, Tony Herrington, David Iic, Nick Kimberley, Peter McIntyre, Will Montgomery, Edwin Pouncey, Simon Reynolds, Tom Ridge, Robin Rimbaud, Jonathan Romney, Paul Schutze, Peter Shapiro, Chris Sharp, Richard Scott, Mark Sinker, Paul Stump, Julie Taraska, David Toop, John L. Walters, Ben Watson, Barry Witherden, Rob Young



Twelve months of words from *The Wire*: the wise, the witty, the whimsical, the wrathful and the wasted. These were our favourite **Quotes Of The Year**

# mouth music

"I was very happy to see how upset everyone got, what a disturbance the body piercing created. The whole gamut of feelings humans have was present at that concert, and that's for the better of all people. It was very healthy. It wasn't about ego or money or sex. It was about democracy and the different things that people do to get in touch with their spirituality." **Ornette Coleman** on performing alongside a scarfation ritual conducted by Fakir Muszler, January

"First I'll put a load of drum loops down, chop bits and pieces of them, reverse bits of them. I'll take a snare, stretch it and take the middle bit out of that. On top of that I'll layer it with little bits of 808 drum machine, 727 percussion, bits of 909. Then I'll do a riff on tape and build something to go with that riff. While that's working, I'll take the original riff away, work on the riff I've just made, then take that away until I'm left with the first and last riff. It's seeing what fits and what doesn't." **A Guy Called Gerald** elaborates on the creative process in the digital age, January

"I used to hang out — much to their resentment, I don't doubt — with The Seeds. I used to turn up at a lot of Seeds gigs and I've even got photographs of me with The Seeds, and I'm sure they thought, 'Not that twat again'."

**John Peel**, January

"We used to get sent turds by the British Movement — we had some frightening letters. We had death threats and stuff but we don't get those now."

**John Peel** introduces reggae to *Radio 1* in the mid-70s, January

"We're definitely thinking in terms of music that lifts you to a higher plane: There's a vibe that's been lost — we're disappointed in the lack of soul and funk injected into this electronic music, and when people say it's soulless, on the whole they're correct." **Global Communication**, January

**"I hardly like any jungle"**

**Dego**, 4 Hero, August

"I think it's important to know that the people making music haven't got bad intentions, that they're honest." **The Black Dog** (*Now Play!*), January

"I think our records feel a little bit different than English. It can be up to very small things. Somehow they can't make them loud!"  
A spokesman for Finland's **Sähkö** label throws down the gauntlet, January

"It's possible I've suffered from not listening to lots of music, like I should do, I have a pretty closed mind." **Michael Gira, Swans**, February

"A great preparation for becoming a percussion player in AHH! — and maybe all AHH! players are percussion players — would be being in a restaurant and you hear the clatter of the washing up, that incredible variation. If you could actually play like that it would be wonderful!" **Keith Rowe**, February

"I look over at what LaMonte Young is doing and think, 'Jeez, this guy's butt is frozen in the ice back in 1960.'" **Tony Conrad**, February

"The words in my music are like a way of recording memories. I've always been fascinated by the way people talk to each other, scanning brings me one step closer to that." **Robin Rimbaud/Scanner**, March

"The only way to pay attention to the music, and really hear it is to just stop dead in your tracks. The music is like the listeners' gateway to themselves, their own being." **David S. Ware**, March

"I would like one day to have a group — kinda like how The Blues Brothers put that band together." **Carl Craig**, March

"[For *Combust Rock*] Joe Strummer said, 'Oh hello, you're the greatest poet in the world. Can you have a look at these lyrics and see if you can improve them?'" **Allen Ginsberg**, March

"Angels dancing, misty clouds, a thousand harps and a thousand violins — you can see how funny it is that people have surrounded themselves with these very heightened versions of paradise, while they're living in squalor. But the fact is that it is heaven. And it's something that people really do want. Whether they consider heaven as Mantovani in the background, or The Future Sound Of London!"  
**Joseph Lanza**, author of *Elevator Music*, March

"It was January-ish, absolutely freezing, wet and pitch black. The walls of the tunnel were pouring with water. We had a candle each and were spaced out about 200 yards apart. All we could see were these pin-pricks of light. We got out as soon as the tape ran out." **David Jackman, Organum** on the rigors of environmental recording, April

"Both myself and Stephen Thrower started seeing spectral presences in the studio, which looked like the mummified figures of ancient kings and queens. After finishing [Love's *Secret Dorian*] I collapsed on the floor, not knowing who I was or where I was!"  
**John Balance, Coil**, April

"I'll say this: all closets have a fascination with Nazis. That's a fact of history. It's like the Hitler Youth in their little shorts. I've got no fascination with rough boys, I put one on crutches last week!" **Mark E. Smith**, April

"When we played audition night at CBGBs, the place was totally packed. And although [CBGBs owner] Hilly [Kristal] hated us, he had to book us because we packed the place." **Glenn Branca** recalls the birth of *No Wave*, April

"We'd get write-ups in fanzines that would say, 'What's the point?' There are so many bands that are influenced by you that are refining and taking your ideas down a fresher avenue." Our response was, "Well, we're not trying to do anything except maintain a band." **Thurston Moore, Sonic Youth**, April



**“Hanging out. Doing a little travelling. Nothing constructive.”**

What **Scott Walker** did during his 11-year sabbatical, May

“He should hang out with me and my mates, that would be a laugh. I’d be quite into having him round”

**Aphex Twin** on Stockhausen, November



“I like the business and finance world; I think there’s a lot to be learnt from it. And I’m not just talking nuts and bolts; I’m talking aesthetics.” **Todd Levin**, April

“It’s really hard to do this sort of music and there’s no fun in it at all. And there’s no enthusiasm. And we’re not music lovers.” **Markus Popp**, Oval, April

“It was just conversations with I don’t know who. I don’t know exactly what was going on, but it was quite fucked up. And there weren’t any sounds in it at all!” **Aphex Twin**’s dream, the morning after the night before, April

“Drugs, they’re my best mate. They changed the way I heard everything.” **Wagon Christ** on musical influences, May

“I’ve been having young kids come up here to talk to me who are involved with the rave full-moon events here in California. They seem to think there’s a big connection between the things I did then and the things they’re doing now. I think it’s fine. I think there is a connection.” **Terry Riley**, May

“In the coming years, the frontier will be tiring.” **Terry Riley**, May

“I did two tape pieces of purely natural African sound in the 70s, and even then I had to travel thousands of miles to find places that were quiet enough. There’s noise pollution everywhere. I had to find places with no wind, no water noises — rivers sound like tape-hiss — and that were far enough away from roads.” **Kevin Volans**, May

“I can’t tell you where it comes from. It comes from silence, most of it. I sit around and I’m waiting. I’m waiting and waiting.” **Scott Walker** on TIL, May

“It was like Heaven on Earth. It was like a bubbly’ gumpot. You could feel the bubbles. If you pushed hard enough you could feel goo and glue. A magic fuckin’ gumpot!”

**Lee Perry** on the Black Ark studio, May

“I hear sounds inside my head. I don’t know where they come from, I would not ask. But I will put them to tape as far as I hear them.” **Lee Perry**, May

“The machines and the processes are the lead instruments. We’re both effects junkies — delays, reverbs, flangers, phasers; they have magical qualities. You can totally disorientate with sound, trick the senses.” **Kevin Martin**, *Techno Animal*, June

“I listen to everything we do ten or 15 times... If it survives 15 listenings and still sounds good then I think it’s a possible masterpiece!”

**Clive Graham**, *Morphogenesis*, June

“Every conversation has its own melody.” **Kip Hanrahan**, June

“There’s very little jazz and very little Acid in Acid Jazz. I was trying to remedy that.” **Elliott Sharp**, June

“I use technology because it can be very speedy, transparent... and beautiful.” **Laurie Anderson**, June

“I write music because I am interested in what I am doing at that time, no matter what happens to it. Fortunately I have a publisher who takes care of it, and there are people who are crazy enough to perform it from time to time, but that is not really my problem.” **Iannis Xenakis**, June

“Where’s the rock records, man? Where’s the vocals?”

**Garry Cobain**, *Future Sound Of London*’s *Jukebox*, June

“You see a lot of Middle Eastern women here and they might have to go out with their veil on, but they’ve got three tons of make-up on nevertheless. They’ve got their veil on, a long coat on and underneath, they’ve got on the sexiest underwear!”

**Natacha Atlas**, June



“The greatest act of preserving something and ensuring the legacy of it is the experience of changing it. That’s the legacy: the experience of breakthrough and change and adventure” **Wayne Shorter**, October



"We were going to burn a flag and have an assassin shoot Rob Tyner with a blank gun. The promoter found out and told us if we did we would never play there again. We decided to rip the flag instead and, at the last minute, the blank gun didn't fire so nobody knew what was supposed to have happened" **Wayne Kramer, MCS, June**

"What I need is a Mad King Ludwig to finance me!" **Christian Vander, Magma, July**

"I spray what CDs I have amassed recently — spraying one side black in order not to know what I'm playing" **Bruce Gilbert on Beekeping at Daseby, July**

"Penguins are very lovable, the difficulties of their lives are painful, like the difficulties of children. The big question is: is there anyone looking at us in the same way we look at penguins?" **Simon Jeffes, Penguin Cafe Orchestra, August**

"I think there's a problem with synthesis and the rest of it. The sound source is so innately boring, whereas you get an instrument like a cello with harmonics — and imperfections — all that complexity of the imprint!" **Frances-Marie Uitti, August**

"I faster myself that I am possibly the most ambitious and creative artist in the world" **Asahito Nanjo, Musica Transonic, August**

"Too much politeness in music — whatever style it is — is usually very bad news" **Peter Hammill, August**

"Blues to me is a form of ambience — it's people feeling this psychological compression, being pushed out of the world. You have to create a psychic space where you can reintegrate yourself against all these forces which are pulling you apart" **DJ Spooky, August**

"We believe that the music of Jousjouka is a healing music and I believe that never before has the world more needed the restorative effect of this music" **Hamri, The Master Musicians Of Jousjouka, August**

"[For *The Border*] John Hiatt came down to sing 'Rock on a long, long beach'... Voborn and he drove down. 'Gave me the lyrics.' He's real surly. He said 'I'm in the mood' and just did it. He put the lyrics down, got in his car and went home. The first show, you know?" **Ry Cooder** knocks out another soundtrack, **August**

"We are, for better or worse, an international phenomenon from stuff on the line, on the world" **Bruce Russell, The Dead C, New Zealand, September**

To get this music across was almost like stepping into a — something getting ready to fight. At our first gig people would be leaping up on stage, and I'd be playing with one hand and trying to protect myself with the other" **Martin Rev, Suicide, September**

"Jungle's a very human, interactive style. It's generating new ideas all the time. I can't imagine a jazz musician not seeing the appeal in that side of it" **Steve Williamson, September**

"We wanted to make the packaging as interesting or unusual as the music itself but we reached a point where in order to fulfil the stock that our distributor wanted we would've had to work 40 hours a week" **sovietfrance: contemplate the horrors of a nine-to-five existence, September**

"I tell the fans, I'm not your guns, because I'm trying to get some pussy, you'll catch me trying to get some dope. 'Not heavy dope?' **George Clinton, September**

"15 years ago Ambient music was a completely obscure and oblique idea. I remember taking that into record companies and them saying, 'Nobody wants to listen to music that doesn't have a beat, doesn't have a melody, doesn't have a singer, doesn't have words.' All they could see were all the things I didn't have" **Brian Eno, September**

"Some friends of mine in Minneapolis called me up and said that in the apartment below theirs some man had raped a woman and they had recorded the entire thing. I said, 'You should send me that tape'" **Boyd Rice, October**

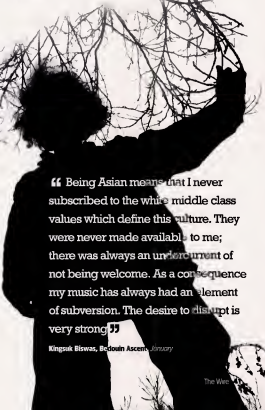
"When we played recently somebody came along, a so-called anti-flag musician. Apparently he said what we were doing shouldn't be allowed. You couldn't pay someone to write that in a review. It's fucking priceless, the ultimate accolade" **Stefan Jaworzyn, Ascension, October**

"When I started the band I had a strong conviction that I didn't want to be part of the mainstream development of rock music. I mean, I like The Beatles as much as anyone, but I've always thought that the most interesting music was on the sidelines" **Tim Gane, Stereolab, October**

"The Techno audience is nothing like I dreamed it would be. I always wanted it to be an audience of intellectual and very inspirational people, dance people, funky people, crazy people, everybody" **Derrick May, October**

"In one Rablaskan opera, I had to go around on my knees singing through a megaphone" **David James, The Hilliard Ensemble, October**

"You can get into a dodgy area [with meditation]. It's like that Tantric stuff — That's just an excuse to bunk up with a lot of birds, you know what I mean?" **Jah Wobble, October**



“Being Asian means that I never subscribed to the white middle class values which define this culture. They were never made available to me; there was always an undercurrent of not being welcome. As a consequence my music has always had an element of subversion. The desire to disrupt is very strong.”

**Kingsuk Biswas, Bedouin Ascension, January**

“ When I was little, three or four years old, black and white people were sitting on the kitchen table, crazy people, drunk and whatever, sleeping on tables when I woke up in the morning. I was brought up in this kind of atmosphere — and this was my home ”

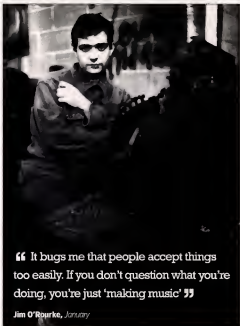
**Casper Brötzmann, February**

“I’ve come to understand that the one thing that’s true about human beings is that there’s something everybody’s inspired to do and to become, and there’s so many choices as to how you can get there. Because obviously the graveyard is not the graveyard. It can’t be. Something existed before the graveyard, so where is that? It’s not real estate.” **Ornette Coleman, October**

“I hope that this record’s a big enough failure for me to retain my anonymity.” **Mick Harvey, October**

“I once drew a so-fi comic book, 56 pages long. I laminated every page and called it *Other Worlds*. Sometimes I think the future really clarifies the present.” **Wayne Shorter, November**

“All anyone ever wants to ask me about is when I was with ZTT.” **Andrew Poppy, November**



“ It bugs me that people accept things too easily. If you don’t question what you’re doing, you’re just ‘making music’ ”

**Jim O'Rourke, January**

“My favourite films are Hammer movies — and those of Murnau and Fritz Lang. The only problem is, they’re no longer in the position to commission me for soundtracks.”

**Peter Frohmader, November**

“I was one of those kids who thought we’d all be taking trips to the Moon by now.” **Mark Nelson, Labradorford, November**

“Music is the product of the highest human intelligence, and of the listening senses, and of imagination and intuition. As soon as it becomes just a means for ambience, or for being used for certain purposes, then music becomes a whore. [Musicians] should not serve any existing demands or commercial values. That would be terrible: that is selling out the music.” **Karlheinz Stockhausen, November**

“He should stop being so afraid of the normal.” **Daniel Pemberton on Stockhausen, November**

“When I finally run out of labels, I’ll end up on an independent. But I feel that would be like slipping into a comfortable pair of slippers as opposed to stomping around town in a pair of wicked stilettos.” **Marc Almond, November**

“I’d like to have given him a good kicking! I don’t mind his *Toccata And Ragua*, but generally speaking, what he did for Western music was a desecration.” **Jazz Coleman on Johann Sebastian Bach, November**

“Any manipulation of sound is emotional, because that’s what you’re doing, manipulating your emotions so that other people feel emotional too. If you’re involved in creation, that’s what you want to do.” **Jon Tye, December**

“People would tell me to stop listening to the tapes and go to a concert, because live it’s a totally different thing. And I thought what constitutes this other ‘thing’? It’s obviously not in the band itself, because there’s no theatricality. Maybe it’s because there’s so much drugs in the air.” **John Oswald on The Grateful Dead, December**

“I swear to God, I’ve never been able to work a computer properly. I even try to steer clear of mixing desks. I’m just the guitar player.” **Vini Reilly, December**

“I don’t remember ever going to a rock concert that I didn’t have to play at.” **Robert Wyatt, December**

“If Wagner was alive today, he’d be writing for movies.” **John Barry, December**

PHOTO: HARRY EDDEN

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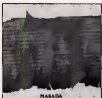


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# sound check

January's selected CDs and albums — reviewed, revered, reviled

## January winners:

Tortoise, *Ocean of Sound*,  
Test Department

## In soundcheck:

Audio Active & Laraaji,  
Frank Black, Gavin Bryars,  
Coldcut, The Ex, Fila  
Brazilia, Heiner Goebbels,  
Alexander Goehr, MJ Harris  
& Bill Laswell, Scorn, Tunde  
Jegede, Steve Martland,  
Thurston Moore & Tom  
Surgal, Ennio Morricone,  
Greg Osby, Gary Thomas,  
Tal Ross, Silent Phase, As  
One, *Swarm Of Drones*,  
*Unsettled Scores*,  
*Wavelength Infinity* and  
more...

## In brief:

New noises from Japan,  
plus the latest jazz and  
rock releases



## WIRE WINNER

Out of their shells

**Tortoise**  
*Millions Now Living Will Never Die*

CITY SLANG EFA 04972 CD/LP

One thing I forgot to address in my US post-rock survey (*The Wire* 141) was the extent to which American rock criticism inhibits the rise of atmospheric/Ambient rock. From the lofty (Gael Marcus's take on rock as an American mythic narrative) to the middlebrow (*Alternativello!* as electric folk), US rock criticism is fixated on the notion of the song-as-story. And so 95's fêted figures were Courtney Love, Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails and Billy Corgan of Smashing Pumpkins, the fact that these million-sellers have sonically rehearsed the ideas of innovative precursors is excused because their

garish neurosis allegedly resonates with the angst of Generation X. Meanwhile, music that bypasses guts-on-display expressionism and iconoclasm in favour of decentered, depersonalised abstraction — Triphop, Jungle, dub, Techno, Ambient, post-rock — gets ignored, because there's nothing there for critics to read.

Running counter to this tendency to treat rock as surrogate literature or sociological text is the rise of partially or completely instrumental rock groups like Tortoise, U1 and Labradford, whose work turns around such tropes as the 'soundscape', 'soundtrack to an imaginary movie', 'aural decor' or 'audio-sculpture'. Tortoise's sources are mostly peripheral to the US rock canon. Eno is admired for his quirky, post-Syd Barrett, song-oriented early LPs but not for inventing Ambient. Krautrock is similarly prized as a surrealist sequel to The Velvet Underground rather than for its

ethnotunadelic and proto-Ambient tangents, and dub never figured as part of the post-punk sound-spectrum like it did in the UK. In a way, we're still waiting for the American Metal Box.

*Millions Now Living* may be it. Tortoise are indeed a bit like an American PIL (ie more muso, less overtly art-rock), one that simply carried on after Metal Box, honing its chops and absorbing each new development in sound system culture, from HipHop to rave to drum 'n' bass. *Millions* opens astonishingly with "DJed", a long track composed of segments. The title was doubtless inspired by the way the transitions between passages parallel DJ techniques such as cut 'n' paste and remixology. Usually, just one element from the preceding segment is preserved, forming a bridge around which the next sound-phase coheres. "DJed" begins as a deep, dark dub-sway of bass, around which flicker rustling and wheezing wraths of percussion, then melts into a jazzy skostream of indolent electric piano, spongy bass-flow and John McEminne's springy drumming. The next segment, a chime-fest of spangly vibes and graunchy bass, mutates far less seamlessly, a startling effect akin to tape drop-out reveals an utterly other soundworld of AFK-like dub-Techno, and it's as though an over-zealous canvas-restorer has inadvertently exposed another, totally different picture that had been painted over. Then we're back to a PIL-meets-Slint twilight zone, as enchantingly odd as The Clangers or a Brothers Quay animation.

If the rest of *Millions* never quite surpasses this 20 minute tour de force, it still contains many delights. With their Slint-like dynamics and impulsive intensity, "Glass Museum" and "The Taut And Tame" are less studio-mediated and more jam-spontaneous than the un-real time soundsculpting of "DJed". Similarly, "A Survey" is a tense and

prehensile knetwork of triple bass interplay. "Dear Grandma And Grandpa" returns to the studio-as-instrument aesthetic, waiting a girl's phone call and vaguely recalling Mouse On Mars's lovely *Jahona Toho*. Finally, "Along The Banks Of Rivers" is a sombre spy-movie theme worthy of John Barry circa *The James File*, all twangy guitar, purring electric piano and shuffling drums.

SIMON REYNOLDS

## Label Contacts A-Z

**Further consumer info: labels not named in this column should be available at good specialist retailers or, increasingly, in high street Megastores like HMV, Tower and Virgin. In emergencies, contact likely distributors such as These, RPM, Impetus, Recommended, Vital, etc. . .**

All Saints: through Vital

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Blue Note: through EMI

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Carpas Hermeticon: through Cargo

contextual chasms through its nomadic drift. The juxtaposition of Miles Davis and Terry Riley illuminates their shared improvisational implosion of the groove, while Riley's minimalist drone follows through to Deity Kuma's "Coyor Panon".

Elsewhere, the guitar freak-outs of The Velvet Underground and My Bloody Valentine emerge from relatively sedate surroundings like biases from passing car stereos. The album closes with impressionistic plays of light and shade, blurring the distinctions between furniture and water, Paris and Japan, with the quiet dynamics of spectral tone colour.

PETER SHAPIRO

## WINNER

Sea of possibilities

### Various Artists Ocean Of Sound

VIRGIN AMPB1 2 CD

Released to accompany David Toop's book of the same name, *Ocean Of Sound* is more than a marketing tie-in or a soundtrack for those envious of the book's mouth-watering discography. This double CD collection of music from Debussy to Aphex Twin is, simply, Toop's argument made flesh (although that is too chunky a metaphor for a book that deals with the realm of aether and perfume).

On the surface, it's a remarkable collection of great music, expansive enough to include both the dainty, Sundanese pop of Deity Kuma and the explosive proto-skrunk of The Peter Brotzmann Octet — there's room for both bearded seals and John Cage. *Ocean Of Sound's* triumph, though, is in the conceptual coup that it manages to pull off: turning a postulation about parallel and imaginary soundworlds into a variable one that delicately hovers in the air at the same time as it heaves with the pulse of the bass.

In the prologue to the book, Toop writes, "[T]he sound object... has been fractured and remade into a shifting and open lattice on which new ideas can hang, or through which they can pass and interweave... Landscape is another [metaphor] — a conjured place through which the music moves and in which the listener can wander." On *Ocean Of Sound*, the same deep funk squelch of keyboard overload oscillates from Herbie Hancock's "Rain Dance" to Aphex Twin's "Analogue Bubblebath I", traversing rhetorical, temporal and



## WINNER

Captains of industry

### Test Department Totality

KK RECORDS 140 CD

After reprising, mistily, my early Test Dept preferences while reviewing their *Ecstasy Under Duress* B-sides and outtakes collection in *The Wire* 140, this new album came with the impact of a wrecking ball. That said, it's a splendid work, assured, searching, and boasting an awesomely spacious recording. These wide open spaces are needed, for Test Dept's Gothic motherhood of sound has recruited a Boschian army of sonic remnants — a cosmology of racket and not.

The steel-on-steel brawn of their rhythmic drive is still there, but so is a new palette of almost SPK-like symphonic grandeur, particularly on the opener "Once The Red Dust Passes (Part One)". There are random ignitions of new tempo ("Hole") and new textures ("Gripper") as is uncompromising as you like but has a curious transparency about it. Rhythmic ingenuity also makes the seven-league-boot HiHop of "Genus" as majestically danceable a track as you'll hear in 96.

The sampladic fondness for found voices is as salient as ever, but one is struck throughout by how skilfully Test Dept redefine preconceptions of everything that is 'harsh' and 'stident' about the technologically-obsessed genre of Industrial music — they bring

its best hardware to the aid of what is, in the end, a beautifully-crafted album. Test Dept, whether they like it or not, have become artists rather than craftsmen, and it's a metamorphosis that demands your urgent attention.

PAUL STUPP

### Nicola Alesini & Pier Luigi Andreoni

Marco Polo

MATERIAU SONORI MASO 90069 CD

The most luxurious record I've heard for ages, this Anglo-Italian collaboration is much too posh to be played in my local Tesco's. In fact I can't think of a single elevator or supermarket that would be glamorous enough to play this. It's a straightforward, contemporary walk-in like Orientalism, or to quote the press release "Marco Polo is a metaphor for travel... the journey also becomes a route towards self-knowledge and discovery." That's lovely, but I prefer the metaphor of furniture — this album has all the reassuring experience and musical depth of a leather sofa.

The tracks are called "Sumatra", "Buchara" and so on, but it's got so all to do with the East. There are hardly even any samples of chanting natives or gongs. What it's really about is the poised stylings of Nicola Alesini's saxophone (Nicola is a man, in case you were wondering), set over the synths-a-shimmer of Pier Luigi Andreoni. Harold Budd tickles the piano on a couple of tracks, David Torn bangs down some nice guitar, and Roger Eno contributes some horribly banal vocals.

The high points are these three vocal tracks from David Sylvian: Sylvian at least stirs the whole tangled gorgeousness of the project into some semblance of life. But his voice isn't as godlike since he dropped the mannerisms of his wonderful singing with Japan. It's about 15 years since Sylvian contorted his throat around "We are blacked out visions in China tonight", and Marco Polo, sadly, is all polish and no quirk.

CLIVE BELL

### Audio Active & Laraaji The Way Out Is The Way In

ALL SANTS ASCD 26 CD

There's a large amount of laughing on *The Way Out Is The Way In*, a

## soundcheck

collaboration between Japan's scratch-happy Audio boys and New York's maverick performer/singer Laraji. It's not polite listening either, but great gurgling guts of laughter, all emanating from the guts of the vocalist. Audio Active get in on the joke — and whatever it is, it's clearly on the comic scale — by blooping and looping the noses together. At times, it sounds as if Laraji has munchkins living in his stomach.

Lath-not or not, *The Way Out* is a kooky thing. A buoyant stab at a territory which, sonically, has its links to the DJ breakbeats scenario, while its attitude — all happy happy stuff — is a more concentrated version of PM Dawn. Its ethereal qualities are served well by the presence of guest musicians who include Michael Brook, Bill Nelson and Roger Eno. The textures are beguiling pendulous clouds of effects create a finely-tuned atmosphere. But the real meat is in the rhythm. And considering Audio Active's presence on Adrian Sherwood's On-U Sound label, there is an extraordinarily experimental substance to digest.

Laraji's genial exhortations about meditation, integration and what happens on the third day of creation aside, it's best to treat the album as one continuous groove, something whose ambient beats are inspired by a sense of movement which is not limited to the dancefloor. When he's not guffawing like a happy Buddha, Laraji is actually a great storyteller. Possessed of one of those voices which thrills to the dynamics of speech, he could probably make a shopping list sound scintillating Poetry by Proxy. Not exactly. More like blank verse, but not doubt the motion.

LOUISE GRAY

### Frank Black The Cult Of Ray

EPIC 4B1 647 COMCALP

Frank Black's third solo release is perplexingly straightforward. Long gone, it seems, are the inventive dynamics and playful aggression of *The Pokes'* best work. Instead we get a very workmanlike approach in both songwriting and delivery — assured certainly, but never achieving the peaks of intensity hit so often by Frank Black/Black Francis's old band. "The Manzan" opens with stop-start angularity and retro sci-fi sounds, and a distinctively vintage rock 'n' roll guitar



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lick thrown in for good measure, it's a kind of Roy Orbison/Wire hybrid which never quite takes off. Thereafter it's a case of crunchy guitars and straight ahead lyrics: "Men In Black" and "Punk Rock City" are pretty much mid-period Iggy Pop without the endearingly arch dumbness. "Jesus Was Right" is a more Ramones-style chug along before the surprising "I Don't Want To Hurt You", where Frank seems to be adopting a kind of 'classic rock' pose — suddenly the man who brought us *Surfer Rosa* has begun to sound like Tom Petty.

The second half has more variation with the instrumentals "Mosh" and "Adventure", but "Kicked In The Taco" is a deadly plot through garage band territory, and "Dance War" evokes The Clash circa 1978. The album is partly redeemed by the title track, which eschews the stodge meat and potatoes approach for lighter pop fare, and the moody "Last Stand Of Shazee And Leebe".

Certainly there's plenty of noisy guitar stuff to be found on *The Cult Of Ray* but it's fatally constrained by too much good taste. Frank Black appears to have found it necessary to reaffirm his rock 'n' roll credentials in a flat, monochrome manner. This sounds like good-time music, paying lip service to an 'alternative' lineage but failing to convince.

TOM RIDGE

### Gavin Bryars The Last Days

ARGO 445 175 CD

After listening to this beautifully recorded new album of Bryars' quartets, performed by Alex Balanescu's incredible string band, it was something of a shock to chance upon the hilarious 1973 Transatlantic LP of popular classics by the anarchic Portsmouth Sinfonia, which made a 'conceptual art' statement so powerfully that I felt no need to listen to the end of side one.

By contrast, Bryars's more recent music demands repeated listening: you have to devote plenty of time to the slow unravelling of his long, gentle melodies and timbres. This CD couples Bryars's First and Second String Quartets (No. 1 written for The Archa Quartet, in which Balanescu played second fiddle at the time) with *The Last Days*, a sequence of resourceful and varied violin duos that showcase the rapport between

Balanescu and Clare Connors

A backhanded compliment that could be applied to Bryars's work is that it lacks surface gloss. The listener is forced to address the form within, as if gazing at cogs and levers in a transparent clock. The playfulness of early pieces such as 1, 2, 3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10, but I sense that the same aesthetic informs the composed structure of all Bryars's scores. The skill with which he constructs each new piece is mesmerising, like watching great sportspeople — how do they do that? I can never figure out what he does with time and space: how he can write uneventful, repetitive passages that stretch pleasurably over several minutes while other composers write 16-bar intros that seem to take three times as long. And though there is little in the rhythmic writing to link this with jazz, there is a deep harmonic element that somehow evokes the great 20th century canon of improvising composers — the sensual slides and thrilling chord changes of the quartets, the rifting counterpart of the duets.

Alex Balanescu's legendary sound and volume (he has already inspired a tribute song by Laurence Crane) are held in respectful check for an accurate and loving performance made, as classical liner notes like to say, 'in the presence of the composer' at Snape Maltings, where all musicians and technicians acquainted themselves well. No flash, but well worth the cash.

JOHN L. WALTERS

### Burungwa The Messengers

B&W/B&W TO CD

### Various Artists International Mehtdown: Free At Last

B&W 076 CD

### Various Artists International Mehtdown: Healers Brew

B&W 077 CD

### Various Artists International Mehtdown: Jazz'n' Universally

B&W 078 CD

For those of us who had our musical tastes radically reshaped by the influx of

South African musicians into London in the 60s, who were shaken and stirred by those fierce encounters between the free jazz and township jive, who still hug the empty space where the likes of Dudu Pukwana, Johnny Dyani and Harry Miller used to play, it is easy to be dismissive of SA's smoother, higher tech, contemporary genres. Easy, but misguided.

Roots purists (and township jazz fundamentalists like myself, clinging to the indisputable glories of the Blue Notes circle) tend to be suspicious of the developments of the last decade, but it is, of course, wrong to try to impose a continuing artistic apartheid, expecting Azanian music to stay unaffected by influences from the USA and beyond. No doubt there were people who objected when Noise Khanyile mixed jive with traditional sounds. Today's fusions are tomorrow's roots.

The spirit of Soweto soul, and the crossover pioneering of Spho Mabuse, are tributaries of the music of Burungwa. The group comprises three London and three South African musicians. Drummer Andrew Masingham was asked to make the selection: he recruited bassist like Leo and saxophonist Chris Bowden from London, and vocalist Themba Mtshambo, pianist Moses Moleleka and guitarist Moleise Mayekela from Africa. The Messengers shows where SA music has got to now, while the Outernational Meltdown series paints in the background in more detail. The sounds and rhythms of Kwela and Mbaqanga, Marabi and Mbupe are still in the mix, but they are not the dominant ingredients, just as they are no longer quite so central to Azanian music. Burungwa owes as much to Marcus Miller as to Gwigwe, Kippie Moeketsi or Joseph Shabalala, but respect for the traditions is strong in everything they do. There are a couple of passages of unwarranted sickness, perhaps with an eye to FM exposure, but mostly it's engrossing stuff. The Messengers is the kind of record that chimes with most moods, equally capable of lifting gloom or smoothing stress.

Several members of Burungwa and their guests make valuable contributions to the Outernational sessions too, notably Moleleka and mamba-player Sempwe Mankla. Mankla is part of

Amomponda, a group which is responsible for an inordinately large number of the most beautiful moments on the three Outernational discs. The whole meltdown shebang was co-ordinated by Pops Mchamane and Spho Gumede, and brought Jose Neto, Aino Moneira, Byron Wallen and Andrew Masingham to South Africa to play with a host of local musicians too numerous to list here, but virtually all of whom merit highly honourable mentions. The personnel overlap each disc, and in turn each one draws on the varied elements of Azanian tradition (plus, on *Free At Last*, what sound to my amateur ears like West African griot styles) but they all have their own distinctive character.

*Free At Last* deals primarily with what might arguably be regarded as the classical tradition, while *Healer's Brew* digs deeper into the folk roots of religion and ritual. Among the more polished performances, Brew features several collaborations with spiritual healers. The wit of art and entertainment does not run there: those tracks are intense, unerving experiences, essential constituents in a full understanding and appreciation of where so much of this music comes from.

'Jazz'n' University stitches the strands together, and along with *The Messengers*, is the album which will have the widest appeal. Special commendations go to Wallen's raffish, dapper playing which sometimes evokes the nervy energy of Mongoze Feza, the potent bass of Fania Zulu, and the singing of Dato Phahles and Paul and Bongani Ngoboto.

**BARRY WITHERDEN**

**Coldcut  
Journeys By DJ  
MUSIC UNITES DJ & COMIC**

It's about time. Ever since Britain's Acid House revolution first threatened to bring the cut 'n' paste techniques of HipHop and disco across the racial and sexual divide, the dream of cross-genre experimentation on the dancefloor has increasingly become a nightmare of Jive Bunny proportions. After years of stale, relentlessly dull, computer-generated, beat-synchronised DJ mix sessions, Coldcut have finally fulfilled the promise of their early slash and burn raids on

"Doctorin' The House" and the "Seven Minutes Of Madness" remix of Eric B & Rakim's "Paid In Full".

Coldcut's contribution to the *Journeys By DJ* series is, without a doubt, the best commercially available mix record since Sex Pistols and François Kevorkian deconstructed Prelude and Streetbeat 12's for the *Motomix* albums in the early 80s. Instead of using the computer to create a sterile stream of perfectly pitched beats that serves as an advertisement for the individual songs, Jonathan More and Matt Black harness the power of technology to fashion a gorgeously crafted love song to the power of the breakbeat.

The disc's opening (from Phlorentine's "Bola" to Coldcut's own "Mo' Beats") is one of those moments of ludicrous, over-the-top virtuosity — like Bootsy Collins' bassline on "Sex Machine" or the irresistible momentum of Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" — that feels like a force of nature. When they layer Junior Reid's "One Blood" over The Truers' stirring Junglesme and under vintage Electro from Newcleus, Coldcut's enthusiasm is infectious and their vision is revelatory.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this record is the link that Coldcut make between Electronica and HipHop. Coldcut use their own cut-up of James Brown funk to serve as a jam between a Plastikman Acid rave-up and a Bedouin Ascend exploration of the atmosphere, elsewhere, Mantronix's "King Of The Beats" slides perfectly underneath Gescm's "Mag", and Jon Tye's remix of DJ Food's "Nu Blue" hovers around the edges of Boogie Down Productions' "Bridge Is Over". Coldcut not only manage to keep the party moving, but they make ideas pop, rock and bodyrock.

**PETER SHAPIRO**

**The Ex & Guests  
Instant  
EX 063064D 2CD**

**B Shops For The Poor  
A Passionate Journey  
NO WAVE NMCD 006 CD**

In recent years, The Ex have moved further from their punk roots, two albums for ReRac with US cellist Tom Cora have convincingly entered



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## soundcheck

Progressive rock and ethnic folk territories with a touch of Improv here and there. Instant foregrounds the Improv element with several guests, including Dutch percussionist Han Bennink and US cellist Tristan Honsinger — major assets to any Improv line-up. Propagandist sleeve notes by John Corbett are basically an embarrassing attempt to persuade The Ex's punk fans that the Dutch group is right to be making an Improv album. Improv does not require special pleading! The usual names are thrown around like Molotov cocktails: Ayler, Bailey, Parker, Brötzmann, Kowald et al. as heroic revolutionaries manning the barricades against the evil empire of "formal predestination." But improvisation has no inherent value, it's what you do with it that matters. 60s improvisors represented a "threat" insofar as they overturned accepted harmony, rhythm, instrumental hierarchies, etc., improvisation itself was nothing new, already a vital and long established feature of jazz and other traditions.

Nevertheless, the music on *Instant* is not without interest, though hardly revolutionary. Frequently, a driving pulse anchors the more austere, noise-orientated playing, the tracks are short, rough-hewn and full of bold gestures, though too often embryonic and lacking textural subtlety. The Ex are moving in an interesting direction, but there's still a long way to go.

British group B Shops For The Poor have already arrived. Each new album (*A Passionate Journey* is their fifth) reinforces their unmistakable collective sound, built on clustered sazes, searing guitar and throbbing bass rhythms. Most importantly, they've cemented the structured song and improvised aspects of their work with enormous skill and a deepening complexity. Lyricist Louise Potts also has a distinctive literary agenda, where the anguished human spirit turns inward and is glimpsed through the cracks of an old Albanian-style oppressive officialdom. They've gambled a bit with this new album by submitting raw live recordings (from Austria, Switzerland and Hungary, not England, where they're virtually strangers) which heightens the tortured polyphonic mesh, but in some places sacrifices clarity of textural detail and vocal diction. Prog



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JVI: through PolyGram

KK Records: through Plastic Head

rock? Free jazz? Who cares! This is another powerful statement by one of Europe's greatest undisciplinable groups.

**CHRIS BLACKFORD**

### Fila Brazziera

#### Main That Tune

PORK RECORDINGS PORK Q27 CD

### Solid Doctor

#### How About Some Ether

PORK RECORDINGS PORK Q25 CD

Genre-bender Steve Cobby (the person behind these two releases) has a range of influences that range from Brazilian Tropicalista Jorge Ben and doped-up beatheads Coldcut to Parisian political Hip-hop, early 80s Sheffield electronics and the blisful comedy of Bill Hicks. The result of this kind of cross-breeding is an engaging take on the divergent strands of contemporary dance music that refuses to adhere to generic conventions.

Unlike last year's *Old Codes New* Chaos LP, there's nothing as epic as "Pots And Pans" to round out *Main That Tune*. That said, it is more consistent, more coherent and has a more pleasing sound than last year's *Ambient* versus *House* sound clash. This time around, the Fila Brazziera sound is characterised by filmic, orchestral sound sweeps. Easy Listening flutes and moaning synths which belie wah-wah guitars, Techno blips and often manic Hip-hop breaks. The stand-out tracks are the ones that are aimed at the dance floor ("At Home In Space", "Eft Wasp"). "Harmonics Are Shit", on the other hand, offers more evidence of the strange affinity that down-tempo, blurred funk has with the blues.

Helpfully organised across two discs, *How About Some Ether* — a collection of past Solid Doctor EPs — continues the exploration of cannabis-addled headspace. The first disc covers the same perilous territory charted by the recent *Nightmares On Wax* record with similarly mixed results. Sparse funk soundbites and lugubrious Hip-hop breaks are overlaid with flutes and cushiony blankets of synth chords to produce music whose liminal lode, with the exception of the gospel-inflected "Holy Roller", is too narrow to warrant the genre's musical strip-mining.

The second disc, however, bears the

imprint of the collision between Techno and Deep House originated by Chicago's Prescription Underground label "Armed To The Teeth" has keyboards that are textured like the plant, digital warmth of liquid mercury, while "Land Of Dope And TONY" and "Cerulean Revere" are sad lullabies to the machines that created them. Not always on the mark, but interesting and thoughtful music from the fringes of the dance music continuum.

**PETER SHAPIRO**

### Heiner Goebbels Ou Bien Le Debarquement Desastreux

ECM 1552 CD

Joseph Conrad's Congo diary was to be a major source for his *Heart Of Darkness* novel. Excerpts from the Polish author's account of a trip made in 1890 provide the thematic backbone of Heiner Goebbels's music-theatre piece, originally performed in Paris in 1993. "Today fell into a muddy saddle," moans Conrad. "Beastly. The fault of the man that carried me." The strength of Goebbels's work is that it is like Conrad's novel far more than the simplistic document of colonialism that the above quote might suggest. The diary fragments are juxtaposed with texts by the French avant garde poet Francis Ponge and Heiner Müller, a radical writer (formerly East German) with whom Goebbels has collaborated extensively. Each of these latter texts begins with a forest, with Müller's evolving into a rich and many-layered account of Hercules's battle with the Hydra, and Ponge's becoming a narrowly-focused explanation of the pleasures of the pine wood. The problem for the monolingual English listener is that all the text sections are delivered in French. However, translations are on hand in the CD booklet.

The most powerful thread to the music is the kora and vocals of Senegalese griot Boubakar Diabate and his wife Sira Diabate. Their music arises, intact and unco-opted, from the webs of the texts and provides wordless counterpoint. Among the other musicians contributing are jazz trombonist Yves Robert and electroacoustician Xavier Garcia. Open, rigorous and immensely broad in scope,



it translates successfully into a fascinating sound piece.

**WILL MONTGOMERY**

**Alexander Goehr**  
**Piano Concerto/Symphony in One Movement**  
NMC D023 CD

**David Sawer**  
**Byrnan Wood**  
NMC D0285 CD

In the 50s and 60s there was a 'Manchester School' of modern composition, whose leading lights were Peter Maxwell Davies, Harrison Birtwistle and Alexander Goehr. While the first two have got as close to popularity as any contemporary composers outside of audience-friendly minimalism, Goehr has slipped from view. It's sobering to think that there's very little by him currently available on CD (there may be one other recording still available on Hyperion). The reasons for this aren't obvious. Maxwell Davies's expressionist works gained him some notoriety, and he's since become more 'accessible'. Birtwistle has written operas and got them staged, but his writing is more difficult than Goehr's.

Goehr takes Schoenberg as a model in his curious marriage of a modernist atonal style with Romantic roots, and classical forms like the concerto and symphony. The second of his Piano Concerto's two movements is rather flat, with an unresolved ending, but that's hardly true of the dramatic Symphony in One Movement. Goehr is an academic composer, and so maybe subject to Ben Watson's structures in his review of Jonathan Harvey in *The Wire* 142. What both composers certainly have in craft. Though Goehr doesn't have the kind of ear Harvey has, he's a more gutsy writer, and there's a constant sense of struggle in his music. This maybe makes the expression more personal, but it's not pretty.

The kaleidoscope of sounds and textures on David Sawer's Byrnan Wood is easier on the ear, though it's hardly easy listening. This is an outstanding CD single which continues the NMC commitment to young composers (as well as to neglected older composers). It's their second CD single to feature Sawer's work, with Andrew Davis conducting The BBC Symphony

Orchestra. The 20-minute piece is packed with incident — maybe too much so — beginning with an eerie marching motif and developing through changing tempos and polyrhythms. There's extreme fragmentation of the orchestra through a technique of "Chinese whispers", but the haunting soundworld is sometimes reminiscent of George Benjamin's more subdued *Anged By The Flot Horizon* — like Byrnan Wood, a spectacular Proms debut. With plans to expand into non-British composers, a worldwide distribution network and continuing critical praise, NMC is set to continue its valuable work for New Music.

**ANDY HAMILTON**

**MJ Harris/Bill Laswell**  
**Sonnitic Flux**  
SENTINX SNTX 2080 CD

**Scorn**  
**Gyral**  
EARMACHE SCORNC02 CD

*Sonnitic Flux* works best when it doesn't sound like organised music, more an exploratory foray to capture alien found sounds, or wrench out deeply-rooted sonic archetypes. Its two half-hour tracks eddy like water currents around submarine rocks, with sporadic illuminations that hint at obscure depths. It's essentially an extrapolation of the outer-limits territory that MJ (ne Mick) Harris explores with his Lull project, overlapping with Laswell's penchant for atomised mixes on the Axiom dub albums and on his remix of Harris's *Scorn* on the *Ellipsis* album.

There's a feeling of constant movement, sonic loops arc around with such long periodicity it's always surprising when they return. And the muted background pulses always sound like they're posed for movement — albeit mollusc-like — into a different frame. Taken literally, this isn't 'sonnitic' at all. Instead, the multi-dimensional textural planes rub over each other in an unquiet way, that leads into a state of hypnotic unease.

Scorn, most uniquely a duo, is now Mick Harris alone, and Gyral is more shadowy and evocative than anything that's previously gone out under the name, though far more tangible than *Sonnitic Flux*.

Harris was once the drummer with

Nipalm Death. One by-product of his membership of that group is that Scorn's music is often rhythmically dull. It coasts along on ponderous programmed grid-pattern rhythms — an unfortunate trademark. Paradoxically, the rhythm tracks support some multi-textural sonic activity, often buoyed up by dub-influenced, sub-bass presences. Gyral is lifted out of its rut on "Stanway" with piano and loops and double-speed fanged rhythmic box. Similarly the ambience of crumbling machinery and temple drimes on "Hush" points at another dimension that should be explored more.

**MIKE BARNES**

**Tunde Jegede**  
**Lamentation**  
TRICOR RECORDS TRICD 1001 CD

Jegede is a young cellist and composer trained both in European and African classical traditions, though his expertise as a performer would seem to be principally with the former. His idea is that these musics share common features and particularly that the kora music of Mali and Bach's solo cello music share a distinct and compatible sense of lamentation: "the cry of pain and despair, loss and regret". The thesis seems fair enough, especially if you bear in mind the multilinear character of both musics and the ornamented quality of old West African masters such as Sekou Betsoukou Kouyate and Sory Kanda Kouyate.

Jegede's music is largely West African roots, transcribed, arranged and transformed for cello, balaphon, flute and kora. Many of the melodies and themes, such as "Song Of The Eternal", are very familiar and true to their sources while adapting to their new settings surprisingly well, often coming out sounding rather like Irish music. Despoise moments of considerable beauty, the pieces do not really work as a suite and over the length of the whole CD the music palls. A sense of worthiness and self-importance emerges that becomes tiresome. Also, there is an unevenness within the material that suggests that Jegede is perhaps not yet quite as far along his creative path as he thinks he is.

On the evidence of *Lamentation*, I don't think he has established a strong enough basis for a new genre of



**KEIJI HAINO**  
**It Challenge to fate (JSH 5442S)**



**FUSHITSUSHIN**  
**The Confusion appears (JSH 5443S)**



**BETSOU KOUYATE**  
**Reverence of life (JSH 5444S)**



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## soundcheck

composition, which seems to be his aim, though it is an eminently marketable exercise which will appeal to listeners schooled on Garbarek and The Hilliards, Görecki and Part. It is arguable that musicians such as Baaba Maal, Steve Coleman, Gen Velez and Rahib Abou-Khalil — let alone Dilla and Alex Reece — are already combining in their very different ways, African musical elements with Western derived techniques and technologies in much more inventive and forward-looking ways. Jegede's music is nice enough and no doubt sincere, but, so far at least, it is no more than that.

**RICHARD SCOTT**

## Liminal Nofrotu

KNOTTING FACTORY WORKS KFW 170 CD

Liminal are a trio of downtown New York avantists (DJ Olive on turntables, Loop on sampler and ex-Lounge Lizard guitarist Danny Blume) who, like cohort DJ Spooky, specialise in a particularly 'New York' take on Ambient soundscaping. The tracks on *Nofrotu* display a brooding menace born of claustrophobic settings and compressed energy — a 21st century version of Duke Ellington's 'Harlem Air Shaft'.

With the exception of 'Plague', which layers its samples, effects and scratches over a throbbing bassline, and the skewed HipHop of 'Schreck Factor 9', the tracks are set against a background of orchestral records cued backwards, and sparse, brutally windswept sound fragments. Perhaps it's the knowledge that some of this album was originally conceived as a live soundtrack to a screening of FW Mumau's *Nofrotu*, but Liminal's brand of solatonsism, or 'ill-bient' as they call it, sounds like the aural representation of infestation gnawing guitar phrases, static that encroaches on the soundscape with viral penitents, rhythm that expands and contracts in palpitations. The persistent buzzing of Middle Eastern clannets on 'Carpathia' and 'Knock' works in much the same way as a relentless gamelan, resembling the incidental, skin-crawling drone of invisible, invading insects.

The progression of *Nofrotu* is from the inside out, working against music's standard logic of enticing the listener inwards. *Nofrotu*'s dynamic is so



**Knitting Factory: through Cargo**

**Lee: through Impetus, Cadillac, These**

**Phobos/Noi Sei Sakai: through Rough Trade retail (0171 240 0105)**

**Phishing Of Americans: through Harmonia Mundi**

**Materiali Sonori: through New West**

**Pinkies: through SRO**

**Plastic Utters: through 3MR/Sony**

**New Electronics: through BaseWood**

**New World: through Harmonia Mundi**

stunted and repressed that it feels like the music is trying to escape its surroundings. Of course, it can't.

**PETER SHAPIRO**

## Hannibal Lokumbe African Portraits

TELDEC 4509 98802 CD

Hannibal Lokumbe — plan Hannibal on the composer credits and album title — seems to be a jazz trumpeter and aspiring composer in the Western orchestral tradition (there's no information about him on the sleeve, and he's a new name to me). He's got together an unlikely team including Daniel Barenboim and The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, blues guitarist David 'Honeyboy' Edwards and a kora player, plus a jazz group featuring pianist Ron Burton and bassist Cecil McBee. In an ambitious series of set-piece episodes, they tell the story of the African diaspora from the capture of the slaves to the present.

If anything exemplifies *The Wire*'s concern with crossing genres, it ought to be *African Portraits*. But the effect is more juxtaposition than anything else, the episodes too loosely held together. The writing is let down by the all-too-familiar jazzier lacklustre treatment of that overbearing Western cultural artefact, the symphony orchestra. When the operatic singing, incongruously, first appears, the effect is more like Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* on a very off night indeed (though maybe it's right that Western imperialism should be represented by its musical equivalent).

The figures are — not surprising given the format and time-span covered — representative, not individuals. But there are moving moments. The African characterisation of the slave traders as, literally, devils, is startling because of the Western-conned history we've been fed, at least until Alex Haley. But singer Jevetta Steele's sobbing lament is formulaic, and the whole over-ambitious project is shot through with ironies which need more than a review to uncwaver. What is a big-league conductor like Barenboim — and they don't come much bigger than him — doing, other than giving the imprimatur of Western art music to traditions that don't need it? But then there's a whole sad history behind that, from Scott

Joplin via Charlie Parker to Wynton Marsalis.

**ANDY HAMILTON**

## Steve Martland The Factory Masters

BMG/CATALYST 09026 68398 2CD

I've always been a bit suspicious of artists who rip their shirts off for record sleeves without good physical reason, and Martland's no exception. The whole Factory gimmick of blurring boundaries between pop and classical packaging on the records Martland recorded for the label in the 1980s (and which are compiled here) backfired because people, far from abandoning extra-musical imagistic preconceptions about what represented what, merely had their prejudices confirmed once they'd heard the music. Christ, we thought, this bloke's a bit of a poser, isn't he?

Which is a shame, because Martland isn't. It's undeniable that too much exposure to his music resembles being shouted at for a very long time, particularly in the bulldozing relentlessness of 'Baby Yaa' which opens this collection, but the guy has unimpeachable technical and spiritual talent. Framed by passages of serenely meditative anguish which share like old brass icons, it's a harrowing, post-minimal primal scream of barely tonal and luridly-hued tableaux. It makes Martland less the new Blake (as was once absurdly claimed), more the new Goya.

But few notes are wasted. Martland's ability to wing significant details out of pared-down melodic material seems boundless, not least in the two-piano 'Drift', which demonstrates his gift for spatial and rhythmic ambiguity. It's no disgrace that Martland's own performances of his music that occupy disc two diminish his work's vitality and idiosyncrasy. The complicated supernova of string lines on 'Crossing The Border' is rendered too like a PoMo version of Elgar's 'Introduction And Allegro: Pinnole' — its jockey, hide-and-seek rhythms, kazooing sazes and muted brass recall Loose Tubes at their beret-wearing, piss-about worst. 1985's 'American Invention' is, however, a delight, a sprawling, bawling over-emphasis of every trick in Martland's book. It might lack maturity and assurance but

compensates with sheer approachability and good spirits — something Marland has surely always been after.  
**PAUL STUMP**

**Thurston Moore/Tom Seargal**  
**Klangfarbenmelodie**  
CORPUS HERMETICUM HERMES 011 CD

**Doramaar Copula**  
CORPUS HERMETICUM HERMES 012 CD

**Musica Humana A Handful Of Dust**  
CORPUS HERMETICUM HERMES 005 CD

The tiny, deliberately reclusive Corpus Hermeticum label, run by Bruce Russell of The Dead C from Lyttelton, New Zealand, curates a collection of lo-key avant rock that's way beyond lo-fi. After 1995's Britpop explosion and the commodification of post-Cobain Grunge repositioned alternative rock within the Establishment, many rockers that didn't go with the flow tended to retreat into self-imposed hermetic wanderings, leading to an interesting series of covert activities and side trips as post-rock careers dovetail with other 'rock' musicians. Stereolab's fascination with the late 60s French avant garde, Lee Ranaldo dusting with free percussionist William Hooker, Jim O'Rourke's recent productions for both Faust and Mayo Thompson's Red Krayola — and here, Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore in improv duet with Blue Human's stickman Tom Seargal.

The packaging speaks volumes — furry cardboard parchment, hand-assembled, sealed with stickers, line art drawings taken from arcane renaissance or Enlightenment imagery — huffing cherubs, skulls, bones, and other mortal dejects. Note here the similarity between such disparate points of reference as the Ennemi labels reissues of UK Improv, John Zorn and Fred Frith's *Art Of Memory*, and the engravings of Robert Fludd. Along with this comes the paranoid obsession with secret knowledge — *Musica Humana A Handful Of Dust* contains a photograph of the topmost storeys of a huge skyscraper, taken at an acute angle to suggest the unknowability of the elite who presumably inhabit its

topmost apartments.

Of course, paranoia, self-questioning, deliberate lack of engagement with the 'overground' have led to nothing more than immobility and neglect in the past. The distinction has never seemed to bother Thurston Moore, but on *Klangfarbenmelodie* (not the first time he's invoked Stockhausen on an LP sleeve), an ultra-lo-fi thrash captured on a portable revolving wax disc (1 sounds like) in New York in early 1995, Moore's normally potent guitar-wash sounds gelled, and Seargal can't engage Close, but no nicorette.

Doramaar's music feels much more like a forbidden, slightly shameful act. *Copula* is a mishmash of live and rehearsal snippets and 'proper' four track studio recordings — Live Skull or UK recorded on tape. You've got to strain to pick up substance behind the nebulous non-production, but the highlight is "We Say That's Not It And Still That's Not It", an improvisation containing some fantastic bass abuse, Kim Pieters extruding edifices of molten sulphur from the strings — so far, so far away. "Heart" conjures ritual magic from a feedback organ and an echoing, barely audible woman's voice from a tape that wouldn't have made it onto a Velvetes outtake album.

Bruce Russell's own *Musica Humana* project comes with a Free Nose Manifesto underpinning the label and its releases, in which the ESP free jazz label is celebrated as a pinnacle and LaMonte Young praised for "expanding now into infinity." Within such parameters you can justify anything, the results are rough as personal diary entries. Snatches of TV dialogue, lonesome wails, monologues spoken through distorted guitar pickups, cassette glitches, tapewinds and rough pauses are all part of the fabric. On "Masonic Inborn (Plans I & II)" Russell even spoofs in a dictaphone note he made to himself about how the track should be constructed, and on "The Lonesome Death Of Albert Ayler" he speaks poetry maintained in like. Like the activities of the British Fluxus movement, the material is intriguing for having happened, but difficult to get into in the now — the residue less glamorous than the act itself must have been. Still, of these three releases, *A Handful Of Dust* is most rewarding — letting you into the private world of a renegade spirit.

**ROB YOUNG**

**Ennio Morricone**  
**An Ennio Morricone Western Quintet**  
DRG 32907 CD

**Various Artists**  
**Spaghetti Westerns Volume One**  
DRG 32905 CD

**Various Artists**  
**Spaghetti Westerns Volume Two**  
DRG 32909 CD

Spaghetti Westerns were one of the great cultural phenomena of the period 1964-1973, an Italian efflorescence that injected the cowboy genre with themes that were anathema to Hollywood: oppression, the cash nexus, social conflict, revolution. Sergio Leone's *A Fistful Of Dynamite* celebrated the explosive expense of an Irish terrorist. New content went hand-in-hand with innovative form. Stark realism was combined with a staginess that was practically operatic. Brechtian parables performed with a flamenco strut.

Ennio Morricone's scores were crucial. Once Sergio Leone had okayed the musical motifs Morricone invented for the characters, they were played on set as the actors rehearsed their lines. In an effort to reach an international audience, dialogue was downplayed. Clint Eastwood as the tight-lipped Man With No Name was acting the underclass pride of his Latino, macho theme.

Morricone incorporated naturalistic elements into his — buzzing flies, lonely whistling, sad harmonicas, ticking clocks, desultory guitars strummed on sun-baked pavements. He ejected the illosonic orchestras of Dimitri Tiomkin and Max Steiner in favour of musics that might conceivably have been found in the Wild West — honky tonk piano, hurdy-gurdies, banjos, threadbare waltzes. Reverend guitar becomes a sonic version of "que sera sera" fatalism. His notion that foregrounding natural detail could become epic and surreal links him to those 60s forces that wished to leave the boundary between art and life. John Cage, Fluxus, Jean-Luc Godard.

If the orchestra was employed, Morricone would write avant garde clusters, alien sonobites with a direct line to psychic tension. Another 'non-naturalistic' effect is a soaring line sung wordlessly by a soprano. In a typical Morricone twist, a corny device

becomes sublime through sheer conviction. Morricone's trademark is a stilted waltz which instantly evokes the stylized, confrontational aspect of Leone's films. The two-CD Western Quintet set includes music from *My Name Is Nobody*, *A Fistful Goes West*, *A Fistful Of Dynamite*, *Blood And Guts* and *Compartments* (the last with 12 minutes of previously unreleased music).

Morricone drew the blueprints, but plenty of other composers were drafted in (over 300 Spaghetti Westerns were made in Italy and Spain between 1963 and 1969), including Carlo Savina, Riz Ortolani, Francesco De Masi. The latter two collections here (both double CDs) are beautifully presented — detailed notes by Didier Deutsch, film posters reproduced in garish colour — but Morricone's tracks are still the ones that stand out. His music has a simplicity that is affecting, too much here is unforced, run-of-the-mill.

Of course, it's unfair to judge film music as 'art', but even a Spaghetti-head will be chagrined to be caught listening to a lot of this — it's tripe, basically. Morricone's calculated montage is devoted to tacky hack-work with 'Western flounders', flamenco guitar, horseback rhythms, Tex-Mex trumpets, camp faranground banality. Italian cabaret-pop, classical burlesque and mechanical hilarity are added in for good measure. Volume Two is superior because there is more Morricone, including the strangely classical "Viva La Revolution" — from 1968!

Italy's counter-coup to Hollywood is always worth celebrating, and the latter two collections serveably evoke past glories. But innovative music is capable of more: a soundtrack to events that haven't happened yet. Listeners who wish to go 'beyond Morricone' should bypass his cinematic mimics in favour of Giacinto Scelsi, Alan Crum, György Ligeti and John Zorn — composers who deal with similar concepts, but unrestrained by cinematic functionalism. Morricone nevertheless remains essential listening if you wish to gauge the achievements of such 'art' composers.

**REN WATSON**

**The Corporate Murphy**  
**Bogrotting**  
OUT OF DEPRESSION OUT 28 CD

*Bogrotting* features the Murphys at their subtlest, most relaxed and perhaps most

## soundcheck

endearing. The group remains against the grain, its music shaped by forces that others seem not to share. Rob Stryker, the director of this resolutely anonymous group, is an unsung master of the contemporary pop lyric — professionals will quake with envy at the deftness of his writing and damn the market that restricts them to clichés — and the finest 'English' voice to emerge since Robert Wyatt. Some songs are soliloquies of disoriented sensibilities, finely plotted forays into quotidian disasters; others are bitersweet evocations of deliberated transgression, yet others offer throwaway pastiches of misbegotten cabaret scenarios. Familiar themes are overhauled and revitalised by a thoroughly original mind. If one song stands out from the judiciously assembled collection, it is the impressively arranged "Four Cole Porter On It," which manages to combine a subtle, savvy, polychord message with an immediately memorable tune — and inexplicably sends a shiver down the spine. The dramatic blending of rich, untranslatable lyrics, which emerge as organic inflections in the listener's mind, and volatile, half-familiar melodies which inseparably anchor the heart, is a joy to unravel on leisure. Great music, also, for hedonistic interludes. These songs, some drugs, wine, bodily fluids — share them with friends.

ED BAXTER

### Greg Osby Black Book

BLUE NOTE CDP B29 266 CD

### Gary Thomas Overkill

JMT 514 024 CD

Greg Osby's 3-D Lifestyles was the jazz-rap project of 1993 and perhaps the first really useful and equal meeting of the two forms. *Black Book* is its eagerly awaited follow-up.

The album is certainly a good place to look for extraordinary alto saxophone playing. Osby tears through these well-crafted grooves with an incisive, pin-keen clarity. Always more human, less theory-led and space-age than his M-Base partner Steve Coleman, he sounds more like himself than ever, and revels in cutting funk beats into jagged, dangerous-sounding shapes. The problem with *Black Book* is the rappers. Osby's attempts to stay ahead of the game seem to have led him into some



**WG:** through Rough Trade retail 18171 240 0105

**WPC:** through Chiswick

**No Man's Land:** through These

**No Wave:** PO Box 756, London SE20 7UH

**00 discs:** 261 Grovers Avenue, Black Rock, CT 06605-3452, USA

**Paradigm:** through These

**Persons Not Grate:** through Rough Trade retail 18171 240 0105

**Planet:** through Vital

very dubious lyrical territories. Up and down, all around Listen to the spoken word Black to past We are kings and queens at last/The past, the future, beyond to eternity" and so on. The best tracks, "Boned Alive" and "Smokescreen", feature Mustafa — the only rapper from 3-D Lifestyles to appear here.

Overkill opens like an Ice Cube album clips loaded, snare wailing, bystanders smoked. Gary Thomas uses a collection of serious, Hardcore rappers, who explode from the first track into a furious, frustrated, gangsta-style hate-fest. Everything adds up here, although sometimes it's easy to wish that it didn't ("I don't give a fuck about how you feel just want you to feel the steel/Foundin' at your fuckin' head" or "I'm drillin your bitch like Black And Decker pussy popper"), but nihilistic lyrics are going to be the name of the game in the kind of no joke/no hope scenario. It is certainly a well-titled album. Gruelingly depressing and oppressive, it is an hour-long blend of psycho, G-Rap synth lines and fluid live drumming — a live version of the Dr Dre/Ice Cube "Natural Born Killas" sound, topped off with fragments of angular saxophone and electric guitar 50 times as offensive as Osby's version of the music, it is also 50 times as compelling, approaching themes of black-on-black violence, drugs, AIDS, racism, sexism and diabolical moral depravation with a fearsome clarity. Thomas plays much less saxophone than Osby, but when he does it is strained and emotional, and a little goes a very long way. Recommended listening, but you may need a strong stomach.

LINTON CHISWICK

### ROC ROC

SETANTA 22 CD/MC

Treading the fine line between experimental transgression and wilful distantism, ROC's debut album presents a puzzle which remains partially unsolved at its close. There's an interesting mix of layers and textures and a willingness to smudge categorical boundaries — rock, dub, Ambient, Electronica — in the pursuit of the unique. Whether the unique is actually arrived at is another question. ROC are willing to play the pop card — "Dear Nicky", for example — only to offset it with a sprawling collage of self-

indulgence such as "Sylvie's Thighs" (apparently about 70s soft-porn icon Sylvia Kristel). This approach keeps you on your toes, particularly when a real gem such as the TripHop-styled "I Want You Need You Miss You" reveals itself amid the prevailing mood of wayward experimentation.

This is no easy listen, but it's all the better for it. There are moments of tongue-in-cheek levity but also of noisy drama. Occasionally ROC's art rock roots are visible, as on the dreary "Thirteen Summers", but generally the air of evasiveness means that things are kept at an engaging pace. "Ascension" verges on the brilliant, while "Clouds" is a sort of baroque, psychedelic piece with a bitter and twisted heart: "I should have fucked the sister instead of the mother/Wish, whatever".

Principle vocalist Karen Shendan gives an understated performance, but this works to the advantage of the more straightforward material. The instrumentation ranges from Ambient drones to full-on guitar histrionics and deep basslines, with a strong element of cut and paste composition. Wild unpredictability seems to be ROC's guiding principle, never settling on a specific mood or tone with which to colour the album as a whole. However, this is also their chief weakness. Whereas, say, with Tricky, the various layers yield a specific and vivid identity, there is something stubbornly vague at the centre of ROC's music, a blankness that accentuates the disparate parts and makes the concept of a coherent centre an elusive one. ROC is a brave piece of work, but in this sense it doesn't feel finished.

TOM RIDGE

### Tal Ross aka Detrimental Vasoline Grief Shirley

COCONUT GROVE CGCR8194 CD

### Jean-Paul Bourelly & The Bluwave Bandits Live Fade To Cacophony

DW DW888 CD

### Jef Lee Johnson Blue

COCONUT GROVE CGCR8193 CD

Three examples of that strange 'non-category', Black Rock. The Tal Ross

sound is dreamy yet funky, his voice floating above the music like Ben Sherman's over an On-U Sound dub mix. His toothless, old soulman's croon is reminiscent of the late, great O.V. Wright. Namechecks for George Clinton and Bill Laswell indicate the territory: an experimental reworking of basic black music values. Studio gimmickry cannot disguise rather mediocre songs, and by the saccharine "Forever (Daring Don't Cry)," one grows impatient.

In the 60s, "wordiness" was the cry of artists suffocated by record label conformism, now it seems to be the obligatory cry, with booklet notes about "the organs" and "sex magic" as predictable as Re/Search volumes on sale at Tower Records. Apart from Jeff Lee Johnson's guitar — arresting as always — this is really washed-up country soul decked out as Ambient west. It makes one curious as to what Tal Ross could achieve if he were recorded with his own group in some shack in Memphis. Lawlessian cosmopolitan superfluosity, unfortunately.

Jean-Paul Bourely has persisted in the loud, Hendrix-like intemperance he initiated with The Bluvue Bandies, and it's starting to sound mighty convincing. As a negotiation between out musicianship and infectious funk, his streets ahead of fusion: his curt, punkified blues guitar pushes and pulls just right against a frighteningly powerful rhythm section (Melvin Gibbs and Reggie Washington on bass, Alfredo Ailes on drums). "Nu-Breed Kultur," a studio "bonus track" on this otherwise live set, has the kind of ghetto bass-thump that a corporate jazz slave like Steve Williamson would give his eye-teeth for. In fact, the studio track has the edge on the live material — how's about an album produced by Dr. Dre, Jean-Paul?

Five years ago, Jeff Lee Johnson toured with Ronald Shannon Jackson, one of the twin guitars in the drummer's explosively transgressive Decoding Society. He has a parallel Black New Wave sensibility to Bourely (and 4P). This is his debut, and quite apart from his singing guitar, the knockout is his sophisticated, key-jumping tunes and soaring voice (a cross between Steve Wonder and Lowell George). The guitar/bass/drums unit is so tight it's awesome, though a bit studio-ariest, a bit Steely Dan. Maybe they'd benefit

from a spell on the road. If Alexis Korner were alive, he'd love Jeff Lee Johnson — but even ears damaged by punk and harmoniums and Disability need this sugar. *Black Rock lives!*

BEN WATSON

## Frank Schulte Switchbox

NO MAN'S LAND NML 9421 CD

Cologne-based Frank Schulte is still largely unknown to British listeners. Although he has been playing notated and improvised music in various ensembles since 1983, his first recording — the excellent *The Day We Forgot* (No Man's Land) with David Moss and Axel Otto — appeared as recently as 1991. Since then he's recorded *Plays Allen Cokes* (No Man's Land, 1994) with Sugarconnection (Arma Homier and Axel Otto) and now *Switchbox*, his first solo album and most ambitious work to date. Schulte's instruments are synthesizer, sampler, tapes, records, vocals, piano and electronic effects, but for *Switchbox* his principal channel of communication is through a studio-based Synclavier.

The five "movements" comprise multilayered samples/leptors (edited by Schulte and Andreas Bosshard using the Synclavier) from performances by the following improvisors: Schulte, Bosshard, Homier, Otto, Moss, Frank Gratowski, Thomas Heberer, Jon Rose, Frank Samba, Otomo Yoshihide and Dieter Manderscheid. How many (if any) of these musicians were actually involved in real-time performances with each other isn't clear. The structural language tends towards the firm, employing the auditory equivalent of foreground/background composition, blocking, dissolves, fades, wipes, jumps, etc. The individual improvisors' non-didactic, extended instrumental techniques offer the composers/editors a rich source of lexical and timbral material from which to construct the larger scene architecture. Pacing and density are imaginatively varied, and, happily, obvious clichés to do with multi-genre juxtaposition are avoided. Also, a sensitive balance is struck between allowing the individuality of each performer's playing to speak, while reminding the listener that time and context are in the hands of the studio composers/editors. Comparisons with

the Horstjucke (radio plays) of fellow-German composer Heiner Goebbels are appropriate. *Switchbox* is a substantial work and worthy of your closest attention.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

## Silent Phase The Theory Of Silent Phase

TRANSMAT/MS TMT 1 CDLP

## As One Celestial Soul

NEW ELECTRONICA ELEC 26 CD/CDLP

For a metropolis that's one of the world's most providing images of industrial entropy, the products coming off Detroit's (musical) production lines churn out an awful lot of, erm, positive vibes. "My music is a soulful experience through the faith, belief and infinite intelligence I have acquired from within Peace," writes Stacey Pullen on the sleeve of his new *Silent Phase* LP — the kind of omniuniversal pronouncement you'd once have expected to find on a Pharoah Sanders record like *Tembo* or *Korrap*. Still, bides are on the turn. Derrick May's Transmat label has grafted onto a European seedling, R&S, and Pullen has delivered mightily.

*The Theory Of* draws its unquestionable power from its refusal to succumb to dingy notions of heritage. Pullen unpacks the standard tools of the trade — pecking, skittery drum machines skating on plastic synths — but puts a few new tricks of his own, embedding the basic tracks in a viscous, compressed background audio (heard best on the opener, "Water Dance"), or stripping it away completely until all that's left is a silence striped with gated chords (check the opening of "Spiritual Journey"). With a pop manipulator's sense of dynamics, Pullen builds climaxes, drops down to breathtakingly nifty bridges, then reappears for a second strike with hidden armory deployed to full effect. Global influences are nodded to but not faunted by "Sport Of Sankofa", underpinned by Pacific Rim bamboo percussion — it's obviously been played on a drum machine, by hand, into the sequencer rather than just sampled off some "fashionable" World Music label, and it becomes transformed, localised, in the process. It's that kind of attention to detail that makes the album so fresh

Cross-faded with this opulence, much of Kirk Degrogo's latest *As One* offering sounds disappointingly anaemic. The main problem with second-ranking Techno artists such as Degrogo, Dan Curtin, Mark Gage and others is an earnestness and reverence for the authenticity of certain sounds and rhythms that prevents them from really plucking golden apples from their instruments. Too often, tracks on *Celestial Soul* (complete with I-dream-of-Goa titles like "Diyana" and "Return To Takimakan") simply fail to accumulate, process and transform the information they began with (what Stacey Pullen is so good at), the effect can be as frustrating as test-driving a 4WD Subaru at 30mph. Sure, there are moments all over it, but any excitement soon dissipates in lushly applied reverb and "classical" balance. By the time you reach "What Might Have Been", with its sobbing girl in a loop, you get the full picture. Degrogo is striving for heart-melting poignancy, while Stacey Pullen's already way out there, melting the mould.

ROB YOUNG

## US Maple Long Hair In Three Stages

SKIN GRAT GR33 CDLP

Yet more oblique guitar trickery courtesy of the ubiquitous Jim O'Rourke. This time around, O'Rourke twiddles the knobs and sets the EQs for US Maple, an Amer-indie quartet from the linearity-is-for-hopeless-squares-who-listen-to-Soundgarden school. US Maple's skewed guitar schematics veer from the standard Pere Ubu/via-Slnt route with relatively straight-ahead drumming, hammering dynamics and a judicious use of effects. Their penchant for obscurantism is balanced by an equal desire to rock out: the brilliant "Letter To ZZ Top" has a huge tremolo echo like Dick Dale or Link Wray, "Lady To Bing" ends with a very funny, Allman-esque "Dueling Guitars" solo. "The State Was Bad" features lots of tempo shifts, while "You Know What Will" Get You You Know Where" even has a "dee dee dee" chorus.

Ex-Shorty vocalist AJ Johnson sounds like a madder, more sinister Don Van Vliet — his vocals are hidden inside the guitar prisms and he's happy to keep them there. But with occasional,

## soundcheck

sparkling bursts like "Oh give my bones to Billy Gibbons" and "I'm a goodnight kiss and you're my black tooth", the lyrics are well worth treading over the shreds to uncover

PETER SHAPIRO

### Various Artists Twilight Earth: Second International Soirée TIMEBASE TIME 4 CD

### Various Artists Swarm Of Drones SCOMBENT/ASPHODEL D953 2CD

Two welcome exceptions to the Dark Ambient tendency for idles to sound better than the product. The relatively lightweight *Twilight Earth* is only inferior (in content and duration) to Sombient's magisterial juggernaut by dint of its relatively accessible sound.

The former's listener-friendly agenda is set by the post-Edgar Froese ramblings over tribal drum-beats of the opening track by Suspended Memories (Jorge Reyes) and ably relayed through Robert Rich's "Calling By Stormlight" and Todd Fletcher's "Night Temple", which sounds like Victor Feldman jamming from beyond the grave. There are kloplops, such as Bruno House's Kuon-flight-over-Burma "Angkor's Call", which is redeemed only by the enormity of its sonic scope, and Djan Ajakan Shean's "Departed", which dissolves in hymnal pity, but there's a stylish and satisfactory wholeness to the collection which makes it one of the best introductions to the Ambient/Fourth World genre I've yet heard.

Step two on any starway to Ambient heaven should be *Swarm Of Drones*. The central panel of a triptych which began in the spring of last year with the release of *Throne Of Drones*, this is top stuff. Ignore the cyber-California bulsh\*t of the liner notes, with their Silicon Valley-Big Sur techie-guru argot, and wallow in a dream-team of talent. Balanced between aesthetics both light (Rich, Robert Frpp, Vidna Obmana) and dark (Jeff Grienke, Lull, Bouhassala, and, astonishingly, Steve Roach), it fulfils its forbidding remit of overviewing the genre to a degree that it is worthy of time-capsule inclusion as a definitive statement. Obmana's full-sailed surges of sound in "Flat Earth"



Park Becard/Reyes: through Kachos/Panache

Public Bath: through Cargo

Rawdon Acoustics: through Impetus

Rentacore: PO Box 3073, San Leandro, CA 94570-3073, USA

Sentrac: through Plastic Head

Sentrac: through Vital

Skin Graft: through Southern

Scombent/Asphodel: through Cargo

SSE: through Harmonia Mundi

Steeplechase: through Impetus

are almost worth the price of the collection alone, but rarer birds like Aloof Proof ("Ghost Ship") and Insect Funeral ("Calming Sorrow") score mightily as well.

It's encouraging to see a roster of names with greater or lesser New Age pretensions resolutely setting new courses, and to see just how far Detroit Techno/Electro and its harsh exigencies and lessons have penetrated other genres without compromising their aesthetic sensibilities. *Swarm Of Drones* is an exemplar of how textural and timbral experimentation have at last been hailed aboard the traditional synth bandwagon and put to good use. This was how 'New Age' should have sounded. Only ten years too late, but welcome all the same. Unmissable stuff

PAUL STUMP

### Various Artists Unsettled Scores

QUNEFORUM/UNE 75/76 2CD

Ever since the Emersons and the Wakemans strutted their superficial stuff in the early 70s, most rock critics, especially the British, have equated virtuosity with self-indulgence and pomposity. But instrumental skill, allied to a fertile imagination, can open up compositional strategies that the less tutored mind simply wouldn't perceive. *Unsettled Scores*, originally intended as a 1991 tenth anniversary celebration from the uncompromising American Cuneiform label, features many of the leading US and European Progressive rock groups of the 80s and 90s. For this 25 track double CD compilation, a number of Cuneiform artists were commissioned to cover the work of other Cuneiform artists. It sounds incestuous, actually the idea works extremely well, and you don't need to be on intimate terms with the entire Cuneiform catalogue to enjoy the music, although if you are familiar with the original pieces then you'll obviously appreciate the major transformations that are taking place here.

Veteran English guitarist Phil Miller elegantly turns a Hugh Hopper Band piece into a one-man, multitracked arrangement for guitars and computer, California's U Totem radically interweaves a string of new and old Hopper themes, exemplifying the combination of fine musicianship and

sophisticated use of instrumental colour that characterises the most advanced expressions of contemporary Prog rock as it overlaps with avant-garde chamber music; the rhythmically complex New York composer/guitarist Nick Didkovsky brilliantly studio-mixes material by his Doctor Nerve group and the Belgian RIO stalwarts Univers Zero, while Henry Kaser And Friends (John Oswald, Jim O'Rourke, etc.) produce a gripping blend of wild avant rock and fractured free jazz. Other contributors include David Borden, Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic, Happy Family (from Japan), George Cartwright, Richard Perhas & John Lwengood, and Virgil Moorefield. If you still think Prog rock means longhaired geese prancing about in glittery capes, then check out *Unsettled Scores* — unequivocal proof that the real Prog is a vibrant genre with an exciting future.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

### Various Artists Variations — A London Compilation PARADIGM PD 01 CD

Variations may not be the grabbiest of titles, but this is a fascinating overview of some of London's finest and most extreme sound artists. It's the first release on Paradigm, run by Clive Graham of noise-improv group Morphogenesis.

John Wall leads off with a cello-based sound collage, a seamlessly musical piece of great poise and originality. Mexican-born Alquimia presents a stunning 12 minutes of treated vocals and percussion, inspired by her own experiences in South American jungles and among Indian tribes. This is the best piece of its type I have heard for a very long time, utterly convincing and well-paced.

Wall and Alquimia are the stars of the collection for me, but there's strong support from the other five contributors. Andrew Jacques sounds like he is abusing an electricity board substitution five kinds of crackling sit around an overdriven drone. Crow's "Music For Blind Limbs" also features tortured electronics plus a fractured woman's voice, but there's a lot of space in this apocalyptic little number.

Then there's John Grieve's sax sound sculpture. The saxophone notes are layered into a monolithic block of sound,

which somehow gives the impression of very high speed. Kymatic (from Hanning) chew up everything in their path like a big green thing from a sci-fi novel. You find in improvised music at one end and it comes out sounding like *Lammower Man*.

Finally, the strange noises of Belgium are intercut by the strange noises of Adam Bohman's cheap tape recorder. It squeals and splutters at will as it lurches from one unlikely urban environment to another. Bohman's languid commentary is like a Radio 4 documentary gone raving mad, and the suspense mounts as he locks himself into a girls' toilet shortly before he's due to perform on stage. Don't miss this one!

CLIVE BELL

## Various Artists Wavelength Infinity — A Sun Ra Tribute

RASTAFAN RECORDS BRD 018 CD

*Wavelength Infinity* is a double CD celebration of Sun Ra's revolutionary black science fiction performed by musicians not directly connected to his Arkestra. These wayward interpreters shed a different light on often-familiar work, make it more accessible and still manage to keep the man and his mystery alive.

Executive producer Gino Robair has assembled a cast of jazz musicians, rock celebs and poets who know and care deeply about their subject matter: in the process he has crafted a collection which crackles with invention and surprise.

It begins with Uya's fusion-fuelled version of "Dancing Shadows" and ends with the ThomH(Chabot)Monkier School Arkestra's raucous, strangely disoriented and utterly charming rendition of "Planet Earth". In between there are moments of pure awe: Ex-Can vocalist Malcolm Mooney materialises to recite "Darkness Light" in a voice that slips by like a homed shadow, Eugene Chadbourne and Grandmother Jimmy Cat Black rake (literally) over "Space Is The Place", Thurston Moore and Ezra La Plante break New York drawl and synthesizer squawk into "Cosmic Equation", and '70s rockers NRBQ slam their collective shoulder behind "Fate Is A Pleasant Mood".

The most surprising performances come from more unlikely sources, such

as Phantom Radio, whose dub mix of "The Nile", complete with a Sun Ra Moog sample, rattles the same electro-Ambient case as Techno Animal Spookier still is The Residents' unearthly attack on "Daydream In Space (Space Is The Place)", which was to have been part of a full-blown tribute to Sun Ra on a planned, but never released, album in the group's Great American Composers series. This fragment, from 1985, is all that was recorded and it is wonderful to hear it in the context of this project. Deep in their San Francisco secret laboratory, they revive Ra's rockschord organ howl, stab it with knives and produce a nightmare dream sequence in sound which reverberates and mutates into something indescribably alien. This track captures The Residents at their best and the essence of Sun Ra at his most strange and discordant.

EDWIN POUNCEY

## Various Artists Battlegrounds: A Collection Of Hardcore Cyberpunk

MOKUM DB 4790 CD

Now that Jungle is totally assembled, and even Happy Hardcore and Handbag House have their apologists, Dutch Gabba House is the only post-rave style left to be gentrified. Gabba is the most extreme version of the ultra-fast hardcore Techno that's still popular in Northern Europe and Scotland. If Hardcore is denuded by Detroit bulls as 'the new Heavy Metal' then Gabba is the rave equivalent of thrash: even faster (180-250 bpm), even more macho, mindless and monotonous.

The English connotations of 'gab' — 'to talk in a rapid, thoughtless manner' — are stunningly appropriate, but in Dutch 'gabber' means 'mule, led, yobber'. This Rotterdam-based 'hooligan-house' originally emerged in antagonism to the more decorous Amsterdam rave scene. Originally a negative, exclusionary term wielded by Amsterdam hipsters, 'Gabba' was seized upon as a banner of underclass pride by hordes of Dutch proles. Label names like Ruffneck Terror, Trash, track titles like Spermatractor's "No Woman Allowed" and Wedlock's "I'm The Fuck You Man", convey Gabba's rowdy male-bonding and adrenaletized aggression.

Pure Gabba is totally

percussive/concussive. Every musical element — stomping kick-drum, heaving hi-hat, one note bass-thud, stun-gun oscillator-synth — functions rhythmically, yet the rhythm is incredibly simplistic. On the Mokum compilation, Haardcore's "Toxic" is typical, offering the same knee-thrust, stun-gun oscillator-synth — functions rhythmically, yet the rhythm is incredibly simplistic. On the Mokum compilation, Haardcore's "Toxic" is typical, offering the same knee-thrust, stun-gun oscillator-synth — functions rhythmically, yet the rhythm is incredibly simplistic.

Another word but fascinating development is the strange spiritual affinity between rap and Gabba, whereby Dutch oiks have appropriated the rage and resentment of the African-American underclass (hence band names like Gabbers With Attitude or Fear Of A Ruffneck Planet).

Battlegrounds features lots of vocal samples from Public Enemy and other early Def Jam artists. Annihilator's "I'll Show You My Gun" transforms a Chuck D combat-rap imperative (from "My Ad Wrecks A Ton") into a blare of contextless belatedness.

The Public Enemy connection makes sense, since PE is the fastest of rap groups and producer Hank Shocklee accentuated high-frequencies in order to match the aural attack of punk. Gabba shares PE's aura of panic, imminent apocalypse, mass rally. But the music with which Gabba has the greatest affinities is Metal. Just clock the militant band names: Annihilator, Strontium 9000, Search And Destroy Musically, Gabba's u-texts are Joey Beltram's "Mentasm" and "Energy Flash", whose death-swarm spirit-states evolved into the 'Belgian Hoover' sound of 199 and Human Resource (still active in Gabba). Consider the fact that Beltram is a Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin fan and the connections between Metal's ear-bleeding decibels and Hardcore's nosebleed-inducing bass frequencies start to make ghastly sense.

Thankfully, Gabba also has something of Metal's self-parodic sense of humour. The logo of Gabba-label KNOR is a horned demon in diapers, while the Babyboom label's mascot is a nappycat infant giving you the finger: both images

nice blend rave's regression with Metal's paucity. And the most enjoyable tracks here are the silliest. Despite its Sabbath-echoing title, Search And Destroy's "Iron Man" is a wonderfully daft collage of rave styles, cutting from sped-up regga chants to a snatch of The Buggles' soppy "Elastic", to a burst of Ruffe Cru's 92 classic "Dancin'", to 303 Acid-up drops, to a brief interlude where the 200 bpm frenzy drops to a languid 90 bpm skank. Also exemplifying the new hybrid of Happy-Gabba or Fun-core (Gabba infused with Happy Hardcore's cheesiness) is Technohead's "I Wanna Be A Happy", whose nursery-rhyme tantrum ("I want to get highbut I never knew why") is belovely by an apocalyptic Poly Styrene soundtrack.

At its best, Gabba is a blast.

SIMON REYNOLDS

## Yosefa The Desert Speaks

HEMISPHERE COHEX 3721 CD

In spite of the fact that the dominant language on *The Desert Speaks* is Hebrew, track titles are only printed in English on the CD sleeve. This is disingenuous because the sound of Hebrew is one of the record's charms. Softer than Arabic, it is mired here to melodies which owe as much to Eastern Europe as to the Middle East, and this in a very up-to-the-minute Ambient context which reminds us that Israel is part of a Europe that is defined by MTV as well as the Warsaw ghetto. Yosefa is representative of this multiplicity: her mother was Moroccan, her father Yemenite, one of her composers was born Romanian.

Despite undeniably modernist arrangements, the old gaudy European principle of songwriting as the setting of poetry to music is prevalent here. Although Yosefa uses similar scales and ornaments as, say, Otha Haza, she doesn't possess so spectacular a voice, and this absence of physical immediacy will disappoint sensation-seekers. In fact, this alliance of cosmopolitan modernism, sophisticated songwriting and vocal understatement is more reminiscent of Kylie Minogue's "Confide In Me", and this has to be taken as praise as well as a handy point of comparison.

SYLVESTRE BALAZARD

# in brief japan

David Elle hears detonations in the Oriental underground.

## Mamoru Fujieda *The Night Chant*

**IZADIK TZ 72003 CD** Mamoru Fujieda's music takes on a raft of Eastern forms, not just the ancient courtly traditions of Japanese Gagaku, but also those of Indonesian gamelan and Navaho sand painting. Computer technology adds another, contrasting contemporary layer to his compositional armoury: the result is a music that is strangely timeless and utterly unique. Two very differently structured "Night Chants" feature here. "Night Chant III" pursues a linear path with just shomyo Buddhist chanting and computer; "Night Chant I" is more "circular," with omnipresent flute and tinkling sound sculptures picking up traditional Japanese stringed, wind and percussive instruments in addition to voice and computer on each of its four turns. Fujieda pitches his microtonal bending at the very threshold of audibility — this is truly Deep Listening music, something to which you must give body and soul. The rewards to attentive ears are multiple, its intricacies, save for those of Harry Partch's music, are without equal. Highly recommended.

## Keiji Haino *Tenchi No Ginkka* **IZADIK TZ 72003 CD** Keiji Haino & Loren Mazza Cane Connors **Live At Downtown Music Gallery, New York City**

**PERSONA NON GRATA 2 CD** Two Stateside releases portraying lesser-documented facets of Haino's musical persona. *Tenchi No Ginkka* is a studio date focusing on Haino's deft use of percussives, in which metal and skin surfaces alike resonate their ghostly chorale accompaniments to his otherworldly vocals. The change of instrumental focus demands a different tack on sound and space, but these nine unspooled workouts are as intense and sharply focused as any of Haino's historic guitar forays.

The live date — a low-key impromptu affair which took place in a Manhattan record shop — with fellow guitarist and blues aficionado Connors is a strangely muted affair. While bog standard 12-



bar clichés are noticeably absent, Haino's and Connors's exchanges rarely get beyond the deferential if only someone had decided to rock the boat.

## Uchihasi Kazuhisa Guitars

### **Solo ZEN-002 CD**

**States Mosaic** GOD MOUNTAIN GHCD 015 CD Uchihasi's solo improvisations build on a detailed yet careful use of effects. Like Bill Fissel he plays with a grace and sensibility that opens up the narrative as well as the textural, something which the original, highly effective sequencing of these 18 tracks (all but one of them taken from seven live concerts over two years) helps bring to the fore. *Guitar Solo* is one to forsake the random-play control for.

Altered States, Uchihasi's power trio, spotlights his more conventional rock-orientated leanings. Improvising remains on the agenda but when composed parameters And it's largely the cast of featured guests — US needs-player Ned Rothenberg plus Japanese underground stalwarts Hirose Jung, Takara Kumiko and Katsuo Yuji among them — which prompts the trio's furthest extemporal reaches. *Mosaic's* centrepiece is the episode half hour suite "Circle," a forward thrusting slice of Prog rock suffused with equal parts Crissom and Cage.

## Kousokuya Ray Night 1991-

### **1992 Live**

**FORCED EXPOSURE FE-034 CD** Psychedelic slob rock courtesy of this long-standing but rarely recorded Tokyo trio. Steeped in the burnished, bluesy attack of late 60s American group Blue Cheer (now afforded iconic status by Japan's psychedelic hardiners), only Kousokuya loosen the screws even more, the musicians give themselves space to float, and the music really gets airborne when bassist Mick quits the lame vocalising.

## Ikuo Mori *Hex Kitchen*

### **IZADIK TZ 7201 CD**

In early 80s No Wave troupe DNA, it wasn't just Arto Lindsay's yelp and skronk guitar that was weird, Japanese ex-pat percussionist Mori had the most idiosyncratic sense of rhythm ever to grace New York's downtown punk scene. Some East Village improvisers were quick to pick up on its gestural content; her sense of using sound and space was decidedly Eastern, but drum kits made it sound dry. Using

modified drum machines has not only given her a much broader sonic palette, it has brought her percussive language to life. *Hex Kitchen* is a testament to her singularity of purpose: it etches her sense of contrasting dynamics and attack with and without longtime associates and fellow shakers of music's extended language such as harpist Zeena Parkins, trombonist Jim Staley and reeds player John Zorn.

## Rains Hyderomastgronngem

### **IZADIK TZ 7202 CD**

**Rains Infect** SSE 558018 CD Still something of a lone force on the Japanese scene despite their ten-year history, Rains' radical redraft of what you can expect from just bass and drums is the stuff to defy all-comers. Drummer Yoshida Tatsuya is still trying to claw the shirt off Christian Vander's back — the choppy metrical frameworks, the pounding repetitions, even the falsetto singing in tongues

harken back to the work of French Prog innovators Magma — but the rigorous application of such minimal instrumental trappings is something unique to Rains' music; it's cutting edge in more than just intent. *Hyderomastgronngem*, recorded in 1993, is a good part of entry, an unfettered recording by Martin Bisi (sounds like it went down live) that illustrates both the rigorous rhythmic discipline and their resourcefulness in the textural department. Inlet dates from 1988, and is restored on CD both in its original and remixed forms, shuffle-play allows you to pick and mix between spine-tingling distortion and a more open, airy reanimation.

## Shizuka Live Shizuka

### **PERSONA NON GRATA 1 CD**

#### **Slap Happy**

#### **Humphrey Slap Happy Humphrey**

#### **PUBLIC BATH PBED-7 CD**

In which psychedelia and folk cross paths to occasionally wry effect. Singer/guitarist and femme fatale Shizuka has the plaintive persuasion of Robert Wyatt, the tonal waywardness of Nico, a nice line in dark, melancholic atmospheres, and the formidable services of Mura Maki, formerly of Keiji Haino's Fushitsusha, who adds some searing guitar figures in the Hainoesque manner.

Slap Happy Humphrey, another Beauty and the Beast-style encounter, is none other than the veteran Japo Hiroshige's tribute to 70s Japanese folk.



**Teldec:** through WSA

**Timebase:**

**Touch & Go:** through Southern

**Transonic/WSA:** through Vital

**Trickton:** through New Note

**Tzadik:** through Impetus

**VMP:** through Cargo

**Zenbit:** through Impetus



singer Monta Dori. The tribute is undeniably heartfelt but a sense of kitsch pervades nonetheless. Menko sings the songs straight to a sparring accompaniment of acoustic guitar and violin, only to have Hiroguchi blast his way through the delicate figure like a force one gale. *Slap Happy* Humphrey's dogged adherence to formula fails to sustain the interest over an entire album

#### Various Artists Samples

**MABOROSHI NO SEKAI** MABO-001 CO  
**Various Artists Bad Sun Rising**  
**Bad Sun Rising II** NG NG-D05152NG-06152 2CD Small and incestuous it may be, but the Japanese underground thrives on a spirit of adventure that actively promotes experimentation while shutting down many of the same faces. The 18 cuts on Maboroshi No Sekai's debut release samples known quantities such as Keji Hano (this time on hurdy-gurdy), Boredoms' guitarist Yamamoto Seichi, avant jazz rock saxophonist Hirose Junji, Ruins drummer Yoshida Tatsuya and PON's vibes supreme Takara Kumiko in less familiar settings, many of them centred around "sample" curators Katsui Yui (violinist with pronounced Improv sensibilities), drummer Ho Kenji and guitarist Kado Natsuki. Little wonder that Japan's underground proves such a draw for the pluralistic musical concerns of John Zorn, whose Improv-thrashcore trio Paiklerik slots neatly in here

*Bad Sun Rising*, made for and released in the USA and needlessly split over two half-hour volumes, compiles new material from a line of already well-established groups (only Yamatsuka Eye's punk thrash trio UFO Or Die offer re-recordings of old material). A cast list including Zorn, Geva, compiler and co-producer Steve Alamo's Supernut, Furhuzee and The Volume Dealers guarantees a respectable line in hard rock, only Ruins, and The Boredoms and their offshoots Omote Hatoba and UFO Or Die cut more radical alternatives

80468 CO There's no querying the importance of AACM founder Abrams' contribution to US music over the last 30 years, but his large-ensemble work, for all its ambivalent peculiarity, hasn't always lived up to expectations, veering between brilliance and sluggishness. Abrams has a fascination for textures on *One Line*. Two Views the arrangements fit instruments such as harp, vibes, accordion and violin into the mix briskly. The writing is eventful and varied. Paces of slow-paced exploration mingle with brisk, skilfully worked numbers and the bouncing "Tribute To Julius Hemphill And Don Pullen". Prime Abrams

#### Abraham Adzinyah/Anthony Braxton Duo (Wesleyan) LEO

**RECORDS LR228/229 2CD Anthony Braxton/Mario Pavone Seven Standards 1995 Quintet** KNITTING FACTORY WORKS KFW 168 CD Two widely different Braxton collaborations. The lengthy double CD set recorded with Adzinyah is a real treat, chiefly because of the narrowness of the percussionist's approach. Much of the time he limits himself to tedious figures and Braxton sounds like he could be on a different stage for all the difference it makes to his playing. It is mysterious that Braxton, who's worked so much with percussionist Gerry Hemphill, should take on this project. It certainly falls a long way short of the Bendani/Bailey duo reviewed below

If Braxton's need work sounds uninspired, then a turn to the quintet album finds him making far more substantial music on piano. His group is superb. Pavone on bass, Thomas Chapin on alto, flute and piccolo, Dave Douglas on trumpet, Pheeroan AkLaff on drums. The selection of tunes is certainly catholic, with "These Foolish Things" striding alongside John Coltrane's "Straight Street". The group plays it relatively straight and allow Braxton to work out his ambivalent harmonic ideas

#### Gregg Bendani Definite Pitch

AGGREGATE MUSIC AGG0001 CO

**Derek Bailey/Gregg Bendani Bunter** DO DISCS 20 CD  
 Percussionist Bendani worked with The Cool Taylor Unit during the late 60s and has played on Taylor's in Florence. He's since collaborated with musicians ranging from Evan Parker to Joe

Lovano, and has been performing solo regularly for around ten years. His background and interests are as much to do with contemporary composition as the jazz and Improv scenes and these pieces are as likely to evoke Xenakis as Cecil Taylor. Bendani is interested in exploring single instruments to the full and there's real subtlety about the way he creates intense and specific environments with just a snare drum or chromatic booms to play with

A musician with such a resourceful ear makes a good partner for Derek Bailey. On *Bunter*, the dialogue is at its liveliest when Bendani is playing pitched instruments but, like salt in porridge, even his smallest interventions serve to bring out the fullness of Bailey's meditations

#### Borah Bergman/Roscoe Mitchell With Thomas Bruckner First Meeting

KNITTING FACTORY WORKS KFW 175 CD A fine, edgy album of remarkable restraint. Neither pianist Bergman nor saxophonist Mitchell are inclined to expansiveness on this session, which deals mainly in careful, hushed dialogues. On one piece, Thomas Bruckner's wordless vocal extemporations fill out the mesh without greatly altering the atmosphere. Though material like "Clear Blue" repays close listening it has to be said that it's so sparse as to verge on the uninvolved. It certainly feels like a first meeting, an occasion where suspicion is in the air. The persistent elison makes that each note is freighted with significance and looks both back and forward with great poignancy

#### Paul Bley Quartet Speechless

STEREOLAB SEC031363 CD

*Speechless* (sic) is a far more straightforward Bley-meets-saxophonist release than last year's sublime *Time Will Tell* (with Evan Parker). Tenorist Rich Perry plays on this one, with a rhythm section of Jay Anderson and Victor Lewis. The album is a mix of typically ambiguous improvisations and more structured pieces. There's a great tribute to the Dixieland Daddies entitled "Beau Dixley", a sprightly "In Walked Bud" and some lovely ballad playing. One occasionally wishes that Perry were a bit, well, odder but it's a fine piece of jazz in any case

#### Butcher/Durrant/Russell

**Concert Moves** RANDOM ACOUSTICS

01 CD More high-quality improv from Georg Graewe's label. This British trio is captured in action in Germany in concerts in 1991 and 1992. It took a couple of listens for some of the rhythmic detail on these austere and rather beautiful recordings to get through. Each member of the trio is a master of percussive and textural possibilities and they move together as a mighty, cohesive unit. That one piece is called "Trompe L'Oeil" is appropriate as it's hard to listen to the ego-less ebb and flow of sonic material and think of it as three distinct voices

#### Uri Caine Toys JMT 514 022 CD

Pianist Caine's second album as a leader is packed with good tunes well-arranged. Dave Douglas is prominent again in a group that also includes Dave Holland, Don Byron and Gary Thomas. Caine is a stirring musician, capable of whipping up considerable proactive energy as his solo build, and with a commanding presence on the two numbers. Of the four versions of Herbie Hancock tunes on the album the most striking is a cool rendering of "Cantaloupe Island" with Don Byron on bass clarinet. Muscular, rhythmically compelling jazz.

#### Robert Dick Works Of If

RECORDS LR 224 CD Robert Dick is a

flute-playing composer and improviser. He plays everything from the piccolo down to the monster bass flute in *F Monster*'s right word, as the worlds of science fiction are Dick's chief inspiration for this album, and the piece written for this particular instrument is meant to evoke the creature from the id in the film *Forbidden Planet*. There's also a multi-tracked arrangement of a Varèse piece, a harmonious "blues" and a track built on a phrase taken from an album of African witchcraft and ceremonial music. The textures Dick builds up with the various layers of flutes are unique. When a star voice says, "my flute is possessed", you kind of know what he's on about. A mixed bag, but all of it appetising

#### Dave Douglas's Tiny Bell

**Trio Constellations** HAT HUT 6173

CO Douglas is a member of John Zorn's Masada and Myra Melford's Extended

## in brief new jazz

**Will Montgomery** cuts through the jazz surpluses

**Muhai Richard Abrams One Line, Two Views** NEW WORLD RECORDS

## soundcheck

Ensemble. This is the second release from the trio, which is completed by Brad Shroepach on guitar and Jim Black on drums. It's a bright collection of pieces, with the performers showing great empathetic qualities. Most of the Douglass numbers look to Eastern Europe for inspiration but there are plenty of other things going on too. That Herbie Nichols, George Brassens and Robert Schumann are among the other composers should give an idea of the musical spread on offer. Tight, focused and full of searching improvisation.

### Arthur Doyle The Songwriter

ECSTATIC PEACE #148 CD A solo album of sax rifferama from the adulously-toned Blue Humsans tenor sounker Where Charles Gayles is about continuous invention and the agony of never being able to say it all (but having to try). Doyle is interested in simple, story phrases. It works best on the opening piece, a slice of u-rock which calls to mind Can or The Stooges as much as "A Love Supreme". But chaff there is too big-time chaff in the shape of a voice and flute version of the loathsome "Frère Jacques" melody. The fuzzy extremities of his instrument's language are Doyle's everyday world and *The Songwriter* is a potent hymn to the pleasures of broken speech.

### Joe Morris No Vertigo LEO

RECORDS LR 226 CD A brilliant album of (mostly) solo guitar. Like Gregg Bendian (see above), Morris's development as a player was greatly influenced by the music of Cecil Taylor. He writes in his liner notes of seeking to apply some of Taylor's techniques with piano clusters to guitar and describes a journey that took him back through the blues to West African string music. He's ended up with styles of acoustic and electric playing that are technically striking and highly personal. There's fluidity, imagination and insight to his work and even a lurking lyricism. Phenomenal.

### Biggi Vinkeloze Trio Sweet

ODD HORIZON 13 CD Biggi Vinkeloze is a Swedish alto player of immense energy and creativity. The pieces "Sweet" and "Odd" appear at either end of an album that runs from shrieking high-register fireworks to tuneful Ornette Coleman-like tracks. Coleman's ways of

thinking appear to be important to the trio as a whole, which works with the feel of interdependent freedoms. The strange, off-centre lyricism of Vinkeloze's playing is certainly well-complemented by Peter Fris Nielsen's rangy electric bass and Peeter Uskyle's shifting networks of percussion. In the male-dominated world of improvised music, Vinkeloze is a woman making a vital contribution.

## in brief out rock

**Julie Taraska** goes nude for the latest British and American groups

**Crescent Now** PLANET RECORDS PUNKD11 CD Crescent use distortion not a colour but as a polyurethane sheet that prevents any movement beneath the surface. Dense, lumbering compositions are their speciality, especially when they wander into the intersection between My Bloody Valentine and Goth Metal. They're following the wrong path, however, because *Now's* sole jazz number, "Untitled", is truly exquisite.

### Doldrums Secret Life Of Machines

VHF RECORDS VHF 21 CD LP Describing much Electronica as "organic" seems like a misnomer — does "organic" imply that the music's structure mirrors natural forms? Or that the music, although created with machines, doesn't sound synthetic? Describing Doldrums as organic makes more sense, for the Virginia group blend Electronica with samples of falling rain and chirping birds. Two electric guitars, a drum kit and some cheap effects units are all they have, but they still manage to mould a new universe from funny drums, resonating waves and the world outside. File next to Main or Spiralized, and await their forthcoming Kranky release.

### Flowchart Multi-Personality

TABLET VACATION CARROT TOP RECORDS SAKIOB8 CD In the Electronic Pop Derby, Stereobias are out in front, Pulp are a comfortable second and Flowchart are coming up on the outside, propelling themselves with the hum of Faust in full groove. The New

Jersey trio eschew crisp digital sound for a hiss that's warm and phat, choosing — like Hove B and A Guy Called Gerald — to use retro equipment and antiquated methods. Analogue synths are their music's pulsing heart, and comparisons to Stereobias wouldn't be inaccurate. In fact, Flowchart readily acknowledge the group's influence, entitling one of their instrumental "New Radioblo Rip-Off".

### Flying Saucer Attack Chorus

DOMINO WGS 22 CD **Movietone** MOVIEZONE PLANET RECORDS PUNKD10 CD Begun before last year's *Further*, finished sometime after, *Chorus* arranges FSA's singles and John Peel sessions with a sort of loose logic; apparently, the album marks "the end of FSA Phase One." Included are several demo and dub versions, all with beautiful eddies of feedback and slowly-stirred pools of static. Songs that make you feel like you're drinking in the wide-open blue sky.

That same spaciousness doesn't apply to *Movietone*, the other project of FSA's Rachel Brook. Stuffed full of sound, the group's debut uses so many instruments — acoustic guitar, strings, flute, vocals — that it verges on claustrophobic. Incidental background noises keep bleeding over the lyricist's catalogue of her life — tape machines click on and off, glass is smashed for effect. There's something intense burning below the surface, but we're only allowed quick glimpses of it. Captivating.

### God Is My Co-Pilot Puss 02

MAKING OF AMERICANS MOA 02D CD In theory, GodCo are a right-on duo: a multilingual, polysexual duo whose cultural comments ride over a collision of jazz, rock and ethnic musics. In reality, instead of being New York's version of The Ramocats, GodCo miss the target. They try your patience with inane lyrics and cool references, assuming you'll be fascinated by their sex lives and interested in every fuck-about jam they have with their friends. Yoshimi of Free Kitten/The Boredoms and other downtown NYC stalwarts make guest appearances, but even they can't compensate for GodCo's self-indulgences.

### Love Camp 7 Conspiracy Of The Flowers

BOWMORE RECORDS BR 94D1 CD Paisley Park lives in Love Camp's

heart, and this Brooklyn trio still bask in the shadow of the psychedelic 60s. Not in the gritty, cathartic furms of Jans and Jim, but under a new tree with all the other earnest flower-power rockers. Production techniques make their talk of love and life seem in the music, short, sharp guitar strums ultimately hold their words in frame. Add a pinch of Morpheus's boogie-woogie jazz and the Love Camp drug is complete. It's easy to swallow, with no better aftertaste.

### Rebecca Moore Admiral

CHARCOAL'S SONG KNITTING FACTORY WORKS KFW 162 CD Rebecca Moore taught herself guitar while touring with a theatre company in Europe, that rub with drama is evident in the way she breaks vocal stride to change her tone or speak a few lyrics. The unimaginative will pigeonhole her as another PJ/Sinead/Amos, for the wail that she draws from inside her belly can shake windowpanes. But to sidestep such stereotypes she takes Gavin Friday's cabaret approach and blurs the boundaries between acting and song. Accompanists including Jeff Buckley and cellist Jane Scarpantino help make her acoustic bellow as developed as her ideas. Impressive.

### Polvo This Eclipse

TOUGH & GLO TGI 56 CD Standing in the shadow of *Daydream Nation*, *This Eclipse* takes the melodic distortion of late 80s Sonic Youth into a new decade. Guitars chime and discharge bent scraps of sound, over which Yohanna Ash and Dave tilt in that, well, lazy Thorstein Moore way. Holger Czukay claimed you should flaunt your influences in order to transcend them, obviously Polvo agree. A worthwhile EP nonetheless.

### Stratotanker Baby, Test The Sky

HOMESTEAD HPS 226 CD Rock 'n' roll should be dangerous, promise drama and excitement, two qualities that Brooklyn band Stratotanker have in spades. True, Dickie Dahl and his sidekicks La Calista, Kid Joe Fiorentino and Artankar are taking the piss, but their R&B rhythms possess an authentic grin. When they add in a trumpet and flute, the mood turns even more sensual. Which begs the question: which one of them borrowed Money Mark's copy of *Beches Brew* and his Sky & The Family Stone records? □

# new notes at a glance

## information from SPNM

**7**Perk Lane Group  
(PLG): Nossek Striving  
Quartet Gilbert, Newland,  
Holloway PR RFX3

PLG: Colin Boyle &  
Sabotage  
Gilbert, Pousseur, Taylor,  
Bennett, Holloway\*,  
Druckman, Bettison,  
Bennett PR RFX3

**8**PLG: Eun-E Goh  
Martin, Alvarez, Yun,  
Legel PR RFX3

PLG: Siobhán Greely,  
Karen Suter & Rachel  
Beckles Willson  
Kurtig\*, Thany\*\*\*  
Warburton\*\*\* Gilbert,  
Carter, Copland PR RFX3

**9**PLG: Yana  
Polyanovskaya &  
Irina Feoktistova  
Schmittke, Poole,  
Rachmankin PR RFX3

PLG: Katherine  
Gowers, Julian Milford,  
Lorenzo Marasso  
Finney, MacMillan, Zwick,  
Lutowski, Robinson,  
Bornstein\*\*\* Ciga, Bolcom  
PR RFX3

Anthony Green 50th  
Birthday Recital  
Green\*\*\* Busoni, Schönberg,  
Skaikotis, Messiaen, Wood  
BMIC

**10**PLG: Sheralee  
Eyles  
Martin, Benjamin, Messiaen,  
Southrop\*\*\* Hyde,  
Edwards PR RFX3

PLG: Naomi Graham &  
Dimitris Dimakopoulos  
Walker, Browner,  
Andriessen, Hirose, Ishii,  
Leide, Eggert\*\*\* Bedford,  
Ginsztar PR RFX3

BBC Symphony  
Orchestra Invitation  
Concert  
Barry\*\*\* Carter, others  
BBC Maida Vale Studios,  
Deodar Road, London W9  
Tickets by post from Radio  
Times Unit, BBC, London  
W1A 1AA

**11**PLG: Gemelli Trio  
Barnbridge, Gardner,  
Trainer\*\*\* Powers PR RFX3

PLG: Tatiana  
Pepinogorou &  
Tubalati  
Minchin, Newland,  
Finney\*\*\* Matthews,  
Gilbert, Reeman, Lewis\*\*\*  
Samuel\*\*\* Sorabji PR RFX3

The London  
Philharmonic  
Beethoven arr. Gieson,  
Beethoven arr. Rozsbruch,  
Verdi, Britwistle, Crumb  
QEH RFX2

**12**PLG: David Goode  
Goehr, Grimey\*\*\*  
Holloway JS

PLG: Philip Scriven &  
Colm Carey  
Vienne, Eiben, Dupré, Unger,  
Schoenberg, Norgaard,  
Wills, Venn JS

**14**Russian Music  
Rachmaninov,  
Musorgsky, Grieg, Busoni,  
Glinka, Rimsky-Korsakov,  
Tchaikovsky Great Hall,  
University College School,  
London NW3 0171 431 8345

**16**The Midsummer  
Marriage Tippett  
Royal Opera House, Covent  
Garden, London WC2  
0171 304 4000

**18**DPE40: David  
Penn-Evans  
Birthday Concert  
Penn-Evans\*\*\*  
Constantinides\*\*\* Robinson,  
Pittot, Drew\*\*\* McBride\*\*\*  
BMIC

**19**Seth Josel &  
Ensemble Exposé  
Lynch, Fox, Bresnick, Tenney,  
Wilcock, Baird, Simpson,  
Bedford JCA

The Midsummer  
Marriage Tippett  
Royal Opera House, Covent  
Garden, London WC2  
0171 304 4000

**19-21**Charles  
Ives: The  
Unanswered Question  
with BBCSO, London  
Sinfonietta, Duke  
Quartet etc. Ives  
BH and other series

**23**Lang on a Can  
Lung, Wolke,  
Bresnick, Pascoal,  
Andriessen, Gordon,  
Murdall QEH RFX2

**24**Orchestra of St  
John's Smith  
Square Montague\*\*\*  
Schurman, Beethoven JS

Double Exposure  
Bach, Gorb, Alberg,  
Scymankowski BMIC

Nothing But Stars  
B&B Flood Opera Gallery, 24  
Old Gloucester Street, London  
WC1 0171 435 9847

**25**London  
Sinfonietta:  
Explorations 96  
Gardelli\*\*\* Spina\*\*\*  
Causton\*\*\* Markham\*,  
Ford\*\* QEH RFX2

**26**Finnish pace, piano:  
The Romantic Finnissy\*\*\*  
Coventry Hall, Red Lion Square,  
London WC2 0181 948 6615

Smith Quartet & Philip  
Mead Daugherty, Jack,  
Montague, Harvey, Crumb,  
Fox/Duhg, Nyman JCA

**27**Music of Today:  
Philharmonic  
Orchestra  
Gubeduline\*\*\* Yanov-  
Yanovsky\*\*\* RFX3

The London 20  
Domborough\*\*\* Schuman\*\*\*  
Haydn St Cecilia's Church,  
London NE1 0181 679 9839

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**28**Nic Hodges,  
Cambridge New  
Music Players  
Finissy JCA

**30**The Michael  
Nyman Band  
Nyman RFX1

**31**Creative Jazz  
Orchestra  
Ives, Turnage, Gibbs  
QEH RFX2

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\* 4 SPNM event

\*\*\* World Premiere

\*\* UK Premiere

\* London Premiere

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Square, London EC2

0171 638 8891

BMIC: British Music

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IC: The Mall, London

SW1 0171 930 3647

JS: St John's Smith

Square, London WC2 0171

222 1061

PR RFX3:

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Festival Hall, London  
SE1

0171 960 4242

QEH RFX2:

Queen Elizabeth Hall,

Royal Festival Hall,

London SE1

0171 960 4242

RFX1: Royal Festival

Hall, London SE1

0171 960 4242

WHE: Wigmore Hall, 36

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## In this month's books section:

club culture under the microscope; the forgotten stars of UK psychedelia; avant garde Americans assessed

### Club Cultures: Music, Media And Subcultural Capital

By Sarah Thornton

POLITY PRESS (Hbk £39.50/Pbk £11.95)

The academic study of popular music will always be complicated by music's lack of a visual referent. Film, TV and literature have all been analysed through the examination of process, content and reception by the Cultural and Media Studies boffins, but an analysis of either the production or content of music itself by someone not affiliated with the muscology department is as rare as a decent pop biography.

The fear is that any discussion of music, without reference to key changes and flattened fifths is overly impressionistic and not 'scientific'. Of course, the imprisonment of sound behind the bars of Western notation is the very thing that pop music works against, but a non-technical approach is deemed acceptable only for close-ups and match-cutting, not for walking basslines and crossfading.

This refusal to wrestle with the sensation and creation of sound has, however, led to one significant advancement: the analysis of the entire culture of music and how secondary texts (fanzines, mainstream media, videos, fanclubs) produce musical meaning. Sarah Thornton's discussion of the post-Rod House boom in dance music is a classic example of both the advantages and drawbacks of this particular approach to apprehending the essence of music.

Thornton's basic approach is twofold. First, she applies Pierre Bourdieu's ideas about class distinction and cultural capital to the dance subculture, which yields the

unsensational findings that the 'underground' marks its disdain with the 'mainstream' by referring to it in feminised terms. Second, and more interestingly, she argues that by 'certifying transgression and legitimising youth cultures', the lund tabloid tales of drug use that raged throughout the 1987 Summer of Love were crucial in the creation of a dance subculture. Not surprisingly, though, Thornton was beaten to the punch on this front by Morris, whose recent 'Forgotten Heroes Of Dance Music' supplement acknowledged 'The Sun as "quite possibly the best advertising dance music ever had"'. Quibbles aside, Thornton's analysis of the media's role in the creation of House culture is a welcome antidote to relatively simplistic subcultural studies which take youth movements at face value.

On its own terms, *Club Cultures* is a successful engagement with the current terms of academic debate, as a book about music, however, it is sorely lacking. It feels like it was written in a spirit of opportunism rather than with real interest. Much of Thornton's writing flattens the experience of listening and dancing to music: her discussion of the rise of 'disc cultures' in both the UK and US reduces record buying to the search for 'the new, rare and antique'. While this may be true for European fans of American music, who — by virtue of their distance from the culture in which it was created — valorise the material object above all else, the category of novelty cannot explain the American 'disc culture'. Like too many academic analyses of popular music, *Club Cultures* breezes over and ignores the political implications of the thrill of discovery, the ambivalence of integration, historical contradictions

and the jouissance that are part of the musical experience.

PETER SHAPIRO

### The Tapestry Of Delights

By Vernon Joynton

BORDERLINE PUBLICATIONS (Pbk \$27.50)

Subtitled 'The Comprehensive Guide To British Music Of The Beat, R&B, Psychedelic And Progressive Eras 1963-1976', Vernon Joynton's encyclopaedic study of what made the UK's popular music scene tick during those influential years is vast, exhaustive and almost too exhausting to take in at first.

What impresses while leading through is the way familiar faces such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and David Bowie are wedged in between a motley crew of white boy bluesmen, traditional hippy-folkies, stoned revolutionaries and even the occasional experimental jazz freak. This exploration into the labyrinths of British rock reveals a healthy yet largely unrecognized underground scene. Joynton and his band of contributors have also provided the near definitive codebook to swinging London's psychedelic dark side, opening the purple doors of venues such as the UFO and Gandel's Garden to reveal an LSD family of wide-eyed hippy witches and gaudily coloured creatures of the night surviving on a diet of chemically-enhanced sacraments. A variety of groups (Pink Floyd arguably the best of the bunch) would clamber out of these kaleidoscopic caverns into the cold light of international superstardom, many more would be left behind in the shadows, including such well-meaning, doomed-to-oblivion innovators as Joly.



Dancing in theory

The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown, Clark Hutchinson and The Third Bar Band. In the late 60s/early 70s, these groups managed to get signed by record labels desperate to cash in on the psyche-out era but ultimately fell by the wayside once their initial creative juices had been drained from them.

In the end it is these groups, together with their contemporaries, who are the real superstars of Joynton's book. Who needs to read any more about The Beatles, Stones or Elton John when so much information on them is already available? Joynton feels obliged to acknowledge their importance, but the feeling soon trickles through that it is the underdogs that really fire his imagination and enthusiasm.

Many of the records discussed here are period pieces, with only a few (those by Juby, Open Mind, Andwile's Dream, Cornus, Mellow Candle) managing to survive the passage of time intact.

Topsey still makes fascinating reading, however: the text is critical enough to give the newcomer a good idea of what rocks and what keeps.

Thanks to the CD revolution, classic rames like Leathand's *Grover Of Mushrooms*, Fire's *The Magic Shoemaker* and Whitting On The Walls' *Power Of The Pacts* are once more available in the high street browsers, a fact that has somewhat tarnished the mystique of these once rare psychedelic and Progressive curios. It is this development, however, that lifts *The Tapestry Of Delights* from being a nostalgic shuffle through some eccentric hits record collection into an active, living guide. A number of 60s jazz crusaders — Michael Garrick, John Surman, Mike Westbrook, Keith Tippett, Lol Coshill, John McLaughlin — get a mention, as do folk singers such as Waz Jones, Ralph McTear, Shirley Collins and John Renbourn (although why Krautrockers Faust and US minimalist Tony Conrad get in is a mystery that only Joynton can explain).

There are some omissions (albeit not-pickably obvious) for hardcore Britrock enthusiasts to arm-wrestle over, but what shines throughout the book's mammoth, 516 pages is a devotion to and love of music, applied to a story that only a true obsessive could have finally unravelled or completely understood.



As its title brazenly suggests, this Herculean labour of love is a pure delight.

**EDWIN POUNCEY**

## American Pioneers: Ives To Cage And Beyond

By Alan Rich

PRAEDON (PINK £14.95)

Maverick, renegade, pioneer: why do these words attach themselves so much more readily to figures in American culture, than to no less spirited adventurers in Europe? Is it something in the diet, the intellectual equivalent of giant steaks? It's hardly coincidence that Schoenberg and Stravinsky, the most significant 20th century representatives of the European tradition, both ended their days in the States, as if the tradition they represented was exhausted on its home turf.

If the word 'pioneer' means anything in art, the four figures who occupy most of the space in Alan Rich's study deserve the title. Charles Ives, Edward Varèse, Henry Cowell and John Cage. Their positions vis-à-vis European composition is summed up by the note Ives sent to one of his copyists, who insisted on correcting what he saw as mistakes in Ives's manuscripts: "Mr Price, please don't try to make things neat. All the wrong notes are right."

That ability to hear the 'rightness' of wrong notes is more common now than when Ives was struggling, supporting his music on the back of a highly successful insurance business. When he

died in 1954 aged nearly 80, Ives had hardly composed anything for over a quarter of a century and had not heard many of the works by which he's now remembered. His First Symphony had to wait 55 years for its premiere, his First String Quartet went unperformed for 60 years.

Varèse, meanwhile, seems to have been quite happy when his early works were destroyed in a Berlin warehouse fire in 1919. He had left Europe for New York four years earlier, and the inferno must have had symbolic significance for him. In New York he set up a composers' guild whose manifesto included the statement later adopted by Frank Zappa: "Present day composers refuse to die." Yet in the 1930s Varèse all but gave up composing, feeling that he'd exhausted the acoustic possibilities available to him. Only with the advent of full-blown electronics in the 1950s did he gain access to the sounds he wanted to hear, and his catalogue of works runs to a mere dozen or so pieces lasting less than two hours.

Compare that with the 500 and more pieces Henry Cowell wrote for voice and/or piano. Cowell seems to have retreated from notions of the avant garde after a trumped-up morals charge sent him to prison for four years in 1936. By then he'd already invented the prepared piano, doctoring the strings so that they produced precisely the right 'wrong notes'. In Cage's hands, Cowell's invention took on the colouristic possibilities of a full orchestra while paying no homage to

symphonic conventions.

Cage briefly studied with Schoenberg who, frustrated by his pupils' inability or unwillingness to compose according to Schoenbergian rules, suggested that Cage wasn't a composer but "an inventor of genius". Typically, Cage took the put-down as praise. For the next half-century he continued to insist that musical possibility encompassed silence, noise and everything in between, and the implications of his work are far from exhausted.

Rich tells these stories with an easy willingness to see humour, intended or not, in what went on. A critic for over 40 years, he hasn't yet lost the ability to be surprised. His final chapter, 30 pages on "New Sources, New Sounds", briefly surveys a dozen or so composers who constitute the 'Beyond' of his book's title. This allows him no room for elaboration, and the space might better have been devoted to his four main subjects. The picture researcher has done a thorough job, but there are too many picture-sequences, as if this modern stuff needs images to help the medicine go down.

Without claiming intellectual heavyweight status, *American Pioneers* (one of the first in a projected 44 volume series on 20th century composers) is compact and concise. If it doesn't quite get the sprawl and exuberance of its subjects, maybe that's best left to the music, and Rich includes a useful, if far from exhaustive, discography to point us in the right direction.

**NICK KIMBERLEY**

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# multi media

Mark Espiner scans the interface of music and interactive media

I am not sure how the World Wide Web fits into a shamanistic cosmology. Heaven, Earth and the Underworld, I would say, are quite enough for the spiritual journey of discovery, without the need for a quick surf on the hypertext infrastructure.

Not so for The Shamen. The group which travelled from the grey world of indie rock to the kaleidoscopic land of the Boss Drum have augmented the release of their double CD (quadruple vinyl) *Avis Mutatis* with an impressive Website.

<http://www.drc.co.uk/drc/shamen/> takes you straight to their homepage, but it is more fun to use the Web search software for 'shamen', which uncovers a mass of arcane information, academic articles and ultimately the above. Webpage which itself provides hotlinks to other shaman sites.

Downloadable versions of *Avis Mutatis* and the "Destination Eschalon" single have been available since August. I was the 1041st person to hit the site between then and the end of November. Despite its popularity, the site is still under construction by the web engineers Nemeton. They promise that an Internet broadcast station, Nemeton Radio, will soon be on-line, and in the meantime point you to the RealAudio homepage (the software company which developed the idea of real-time audio transfer across the Net), which is a little disatisfying.

Nemeton tried to make up for this lack of interactivity with a Netcast of The Shamen's performance at The Forum in London on 10 November. Although I logged onto the site three weeks after the event, the Netcast session was still in place. There were no sound files as promised, but a number of Quicktake pictures (the digital equivalent of Polaroids) with superimposed text — sample "Frigs are gettin' hot" — which attempted to explain the event as it

happened. An hour-by-hour account of a live event in snapshots is not a very satisfying representation. But the section also included a live discussion/adventure landscape MOO (Multi-User Dungeon Object Oriented), which enabled the end-user to indulge in a little virtual character role-play and converse through live text with anyone else who was connected, as well as explore and help create the environment and subjects and objects in it. Logging on late, there was no way of reading what had taken place in the domain before entering, which made for a rather lonely experience.

But this is all heading in the right direction, and with the advent of extra engineering tools such as the programming language Hot Java, which will allow for more on-line interactivity, moving images and 3D environments, homepages such as this will become increasingly dynamic.

The rest of the site has the usual group info — biography, discography and so on, as well as the aforementioned hotlinks and further information on shaman-related literature. There is also an access to the VirtualTea Room, the cafe and Internet hub made famous by its presence at Megatropolis, the Zippie club night which recently celebrated its second birthday.

The site also provides some software. The tree of life, the "ancient symbol of unity and interconnectivity, change and growth", has been updated for the digital age by the artist William Latham. This features as the cover image for *Avis Mutatis* and is also available over the Web as a screensaver (PC/Windows only, though). Latham utilises software that emulates evolutionary game-mutation to "breed" his "virtual sculptures". Strange viewing.

The group's Protem Music program is also based on a genetic model. This bit of



computer code, used on the album and available from the Website, sets up a DNA algorithm for music. By inputting the data from a DNA structure the program calculates a MIDI sequence which can be played back through a MIDIed instrument. Shostakovich and Bach included autobiographical references in their music by basing certain note sequences on the letters in their names — Protem Music corresponds to amino acids and their unique data.

Similar notions regarding the creative dissemination of music via the Net are being explored in the more scope for interactivity than The Shamen's.

Mego began life as a label for new musical environments; the main players are based in Vienna and Berlin. To date the label has released six records, including "Fridge Tira", constructed from samples of various fridges. They have also been involved in some major events in Vienna, including a performance in October in a burned out subway under the city's ring road during the Photokolk

95 festival of electronic music. Their website (<http://www.wiwi-berlin.de/mego/>) is constructed like a cartoon house. In the living room you can download a video in MPEG format and watch some animation pushed one frame at a time by their server. The music room lets you press some buttons on a synthesizer and get an almost instant reaction. Taking this idea further, the MEGOMAT is an interactive music sequencer. You set the BPM rate, choose four sound samples — for example, a bass drum, snare or an "elektrofridge" — then send this raw data back to Mego. Their server returns it to you almost instantly as an eight-bit sound file; now you can loop your own four bar sequence ad infinitum.

This might sound primitive, but it is moving towards a realisation of the kind of dynamic democracy envisioned for the Net by so many cyber-pundits. In the theoretical future, servers like Mego and Nemeton will make such creative tools as MIDI sequencers or virtual sculpting programs available to all, regardless of their financial situation. All you have to be is connected. □

# david toop

enters into the electric church

I guess I should have been watching one of those Beatles TV documentaries, but any chance I get to avoid being the dedicated professional I take. So it was, with few expectations beyond a quest in search of the temporarily soporific, that I half-watched a Sunday night expose of the now defunct Nine O'Clock Service instead.

The half-watching was the temporary aspect of the activity, however, since within five minutes I was gripped. Not gripped with fervour to join the evangelical Christian church, which I loathe with a passion, but gripped by archive footage of the Nine O'Clock Service itself. For those of you who missed this particular ecclesiastical scandal, the Service took place in Sheffield and introduced what the daily press knows as raves to Christian worship. Ambient House tracks bubbled in the background, large-scale film and slide projections covered the walls, and the notorious Reverend Chris Brain stood arms akimbo or showered himself in earth.

All very New Age and eco-Techno-pagan. If only Chris had been named Brainwave, married a woman named Machine and got himself hyphenated. As it turned out, Chris was not the marrying kind. He preferred to convert the enthusiasm of around 40 of his female followers into sexual receptivity. Unaware of this abuse of power, various elderly important chaps in rural garb were thrilled to bits by rave evangelism. Rockin' vicars set back. Charismatic Electronics is the way forward, they proclaimed. The ordination of Brain was rushed through without a second thought. A star was born.

What these venerable, if naive elders saw, of course, was a church rammed full of people well under the age of 70, all of them falling under the spell of ceremonies that hybridised *in die* slide evangelism, E culture (without the E), California New Age nuttiness, post-Glastonbury pagan/psychedic

revivalism, the aesthetics of zowie chill out rooms, even a Laune Anderson show. A potent mix, I'm sure you'll agree, even if the thought of cassocks and hassocks brings you out in a rash. No wonder an Easy Listening reaction is taking over the chill outs.

For the women who were abused by Chris Brain, their experience gave them a cruel introduction to the very essence of charisma, the capacity to seduce on a level where there are very few blockades against seduction. DJs have frequently been likened, somewhat laughably, to priests or shamans, but a lot of DJs would give their right turntable (not to mention a strictly limited edition Masters At Work white label Hardbag remix of Cliff Richard) for that kind of power.

In the face of official reluctance to defrock him, or whatever it is that happens to disgraced priests, Chris Brain decided to cast off his cassock and resign. The life of Brain was short, then, yet fittingly telegraphic. Perhaps in the future he'll start a club that fills the welcome void left by another messiah in the making (unnamed): Fraser Clark. Suggested names include Brain Drain, The Brain's Trust, Brain Fever, My Brain Hurts, Brain Dead, Front Brain Activity, Left Brain/Right Brain, Brain Damage, Brain Cell, Brainiac... mumble, mumble, mumble.

The interest for us lies in those constantly recurring questions about music and the environment in which it is heard. A lot of innovative live music (the kind not played by QJ's) loses its force when performed in surroundings designed for other ears, other modes of transmission, other entertainment criteria. Clearly, Brain and his fellow Nine O'Clockers hit on a formula which raised the synaesthetic power to levels described by American athletes as 110 per cent. Think what might have developed if Brain hadn't become inflated into dictatorship by his own persuasiveness, some kind of raging evangelical Acid House movement



revisited

9pm eternal

A chilling thought

Like it or not, the church is a place where strange things happen. In the context of the collective emotional gusher that shoots off during evangelical worship, a good chord-change can hit like a thunderbolt. Years ago I developed a non-believer's interest in all the esoteric signs and wonders of pentecostalism and its loopy offshoots speaking in tongues, snake handling and poison drinking. Now I can watch cable TV on a Sunday night, Channel BET, and see a Nigerian minister leading his flock in push-button glossolalia. Miracles in your home for a monthly subscription. Thank you Jesus, thank you for such contemporary banalities.

Nobody wants an audience to bring its own rattle-snakes, yet I imagine most musicians harbour secret and not-so-secret dreams of transporting their listeners into sonic raptures, blessing them into emotional hyperspace, reducing them to lexical incoherence or transforming them into sex slaves. When it happens, as in Sheffield, the consequences are disturbing. This quest for a multimedia immersion — a displacement or substitution for the decline of religious ceremony — has lasted for the whole of the 20th century. We have to find it ironic, do we not, that the virulently anti-religious innovators

of the Futurists and Dadists have returned to the church?

Certain forms of marginal music display cult characteristics anyway: the emergence of charismatic leaders, paranoia about the outside world, strong and exclusive social bonding, hatred of critics and a drive to convert non-believers, arcane forms of ritual behaviour, aggressive self-belief which borders on the pathological and a utopian agenda which projects into the future and imagines all other forms of cultural expression eradicated.

I still believe that the devil — the chaotic force which explores the darkside as well as the light and maintains a biological resistance to despotic control — has the edge in terms of good tunes, but that's a controversially loose interpretation of theology. A lot of gospel music is thrilling and I don't believe you have to buy into the theology to be transported by it. Perhaps we all like to believe that the music we enjoy poses questions which counteract the certainties of evangelism, yet the ingenuity of Chris Brain suggests that almost any form of music could be assimilated into activities with contradictory purposes. Which does my brain in. □

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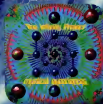
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